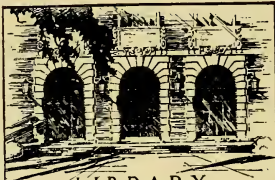


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REGINALD HASTINGS;

OR,

A TALE OF THE TROUBLES

IN 164—.

BY

ELIOT WARBURTON,

AUTHOR OF "THE CRESCENT AND THE CROSS,"

AND "MEMOIRS OF PRINCE RUPERT AND THE CAVALIERS."

"Fight on, thou brave true heart, and falter not, through dark fortune and through bright. The cause thou fightest for, so far as it is true—no farther, yet precisely so far—is very sure of victory; the falsehood of it alone will be abolished, as it ought to be."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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TO
THE REV. WALTER HALLIDAY,
OF GLENTHORNE,
THIS WORK
IS
WITH CORDIAL ESTEEM
INSCRIBED.

The Rev. W. Halliday 15 Jan. 51 1892



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INTRODUCTION.

THE last few years have been very fruitful in the discovery of old Manuscripts, especially of such as are calculated to throw new light and interest on the important period of our Civil War. It has lately been my fortune to pass much time in the examination of this unprinted literature; and I feel a great interest, perhaps a prejudice, in favour of such unstudied compositions. The frank and manly, yet tender spirit that many of them breathe, the genuine feeling that they reveal, and the stirring incidents that they so naturally relate, attracted me. I was tempted, before laying them aside for graver studies, to endeavour to imitate them, or rather to present their meaning and information in a collective and continuous form. How little justice I have rendered to their merit or to

my own design, the sternest critic cannot point out more plainly than I myself am ready to admit. I still venture to hope, however, that I have left enough of their genuine spirit, unimpaired, to afford some interest.

Without attempting to confound the Author and the Editor, I can honestly affirm that the latter has not put into the mouth of the former a single sentiment, and scarcely an adventure, that may not be found in the Manuscripts relating to the great Civil War. The Autobiographer (of whom I must henceforth speak in the second person), has spoken for himself truly, if no otherwise commendably.

One fault (or merit, as the case may be) of an Autobiography, is, that it necessarily leaves its chief moral deductions to the Reader: the Biographer may make his personages a text for inculcating high and pure and noble principles, whether by the example or the warning of his hero: the Autobiographer can, from the nature of his case, only furnish forth his own adventures and experience, for such deductions as the wisdom or the ingenuity of the Reader may distil from them. The same argument of course applies

to fictitious autobiography. In both cases, the utility and success of the work must depend mainly on the Reader, as the prosperity of a jest in the ear of the hearer.

To return to my Cavalier. His Memoirs, or Confessions as they should perhaps be called, appear to have been composed with a two-fold object; namely; in the hope of illustrating the social life of the period of which he treats; and of rendering more familiar its leading characters: not only such heroic characters as inspire emulation, but also such as may deter from future evil, by showing of what base matter that evil was composed. Nevertheless the Cavalier's narrative in the main is simply the story of his own life, such as it was then, such as it might be now; and if it possess no moral, we can only say that he lived in vain. I do not fear that the antiquity of his experience will prove prejudicial to his interest; for the passions — as immortal as the spirit of which they are the features — are unchangeable by time and almost by circumstances: nay, if anything, the religion and the chivalry, and the love and hatred of other days, affect us more, as they stand out

in bolder relief from the familiar circumstances of our own.

It is unnecessary to observe, that the Autobiographer writes under a feigned name; in the reign of Charles II., in which his tale concludes, it was by no means satisfactory to look back upon any public career in the preceding reign. Those, however, who are acquainted with the characters of the Wentworth, the Godolphin, and the Sunderland of that time, will easily find parallels for the characters and adventures of Reginald and Hugo Hastings. They will not be surprised to find Cavaliers sometimes conversing without oaths, and Puritans (as I hope) applying texts without profanity: the absence of such accustomed seasoning may tell against "dramatic relish," but will not be universally condemned.

To apologize for other and greater faults would be endless and importunate; I prefer to trust my Cavalier and his Confessions, undefended, to the Reader's generous indulgence.

REGINALD HASTINGS.

CHAPTER I.

These walls do not a prisone make,
Nor iron bars a cage ;
Minds innocent and quiet take
This for a hermitage.

LOVELACE.

I AM a prisoner, closely guarded and confined, suddenly secluded from the most stirring strife that ever kindled in the heart of a great people. Three days ago I was free, and fighting with all the energy of mingled hope and desperation ; now faint in frame and spirit, I am hidden away in a dungeon's obscurity, condemned perhaps for years to silent and helpless inactivity.

For the first few days of my captivity I

scarcely found it irksome ; the scenes of thrilling and ceaseless interest I had so long lived in, seemed to be re-enacted in imagination ; I chewed the cud of a glutted memory, and was unconscious of any void in its supply. At length returning hunger of action seized me, my wounds had ceased to torture, my blood had supplied its loss, and bounded in my veins once more. I sprang from my pallet and gazed eagerly upon the rising sun : he soon passed beyond the narrow rift of daylight visible between my barred window and the battlements : that little glimpse of the infinite sky only served to render my confinement more dismal, from its contrast with my tomb-like cell.

The first sense of imprisonment is appalling, and scarcely to be imagined by those to whom freedom seems as natural as life itself. The mass of iron and stone that surrounds you strikes cold upon the eye ; the solemn silence of the crowded, but sternly-guarded prison, oppresses the ear, and a sense of utter helplessness weighs down the heart. * * *

The first day of restored consciousness ap-

peared to me to contain an age of suffering and painful thought. I vainly strove to fix my attention on some actual object ; my eyes soon lost sight of it, and strayed away to gaze on those imaginary scenes that recalled my uselessness—my misery of inaction. The thought of escape naturally seized me, but it was only for a moment ; the little cell in which I was confined had set all the inspirations of courage and despair at defiance for six centuries. It had been a dungeon since the time of the Conqueror, and was about eighteen feet square ; the walls composed of huge stones, cemented by tough old mortar that was harder still. The only window consisted of four dim panes, deeply set in a massive wall, with iron bars, whose deep, dark rust proved their long service and trustworthiness ; this window opened upon a narrow battlemented terrace, patrolled by a sentinel, whose shadow alone was perceptible as it approached and retired, ghost-like ;—his bodily presence, enemy as he was, would have been a relief to me.

Gradually my very soul seemed to share in

the narrowness of my cell, and to shrink within its limits: my senses, concentrated on such few objects, became more observant of those few, which dilated in the same proportion. I gradually detected faint sounds and sights in the apparent blank and silence that surrounded me; I could hear the rustle of the sentry's weather-beaten doublet, and the trail of his pike along the leads of the castle. Once or twice, too, I thought I heard something stirring under the stony floor, but that must be imagination. I approach the window to catch a breath of fresh air through a broken pane, and I perceive some scratches on the glass that appear to me like letters. They have been cut with a keen diamond, but if they have any meaning it is undecipherable, and yet—

I had written thus far when the gaoler entered with my dinner, and at once changed the current of my thoughts. Nothing breaks into the reveries of a young fasting man like the smell of food; and it was not only the savoury fumes of a venison steak, but the presence of a fellow-creature, that turned my

thoughts into a more cheerful channel. The turnkey was a short, stout, bow-legged varlet, with broad stooping shoulders, and a neck that might puzzle the hangman to discover, through the tangles of his lank red hair and grizzly beard. A certain stamp of men seems to be produced by nature to fill certain situations, and this man had evidently found his destined place; his small malevolent eyes appeared just adapted to scrutinize a dungeon, and to examine fetters; his mouth was full of bitterness, and there was room for a good deal of it within his huge jaws and wolfish teeth; a greyish sandy beard bristled on his pointed chin, and reached half way up his face. Yet was his presence heartily welcome to me, independently of his savoury mission; he was the only fellow-creature I was destined to see for many a day, and I would have liked him if I could.

He laid a coarse white napkin on the window recess, and I observed him adding the different accessories of my meal with interest, but in silence. At length, he reluctantly crowned his labours by placing a flask of wine near the

pewter dish, and then expressed by an impatient gesture, that he was waiting to remove the remnants of my dinner.

“You’ve wine from the governor’s own cellar to-day,” said he, as I proceeded to act upon his implied suggestion; “it’s good Rhenish, and fitter for honest men than for the like of ye, rantipoling Cavaliers, limbs of Satan, as ye are. It’s little of such comfort I thought thou’dst be wanting in this world, when thou wast brought in here, stiff and bloody, some days syne; I thought our musketeers had been saved a job.”

I was too well pleased to hear the sound of the human voice to be critical as to its purport, and I applied myself to my flask and platter with a soldier’s appetite, while my attendant continued in almost inarticulate growls to vent his spleen.

“Ay, swill away! Never have we a swaggering and half starved Cavalier, but has the thirst of Dives, as if he was already in a place of torment.”

“Here, my friend,” said I, “you seem to want a drop to cool your own tongue, and

when you've done so, please to tell me for what, or to whom, I am indebted for this good fare."

The turnkey emptied the horn of wine without ceremony, and replied that it was by the Governor's orders that I was so indulged; "but," added he, "doant thou be set up for that matter; for the man, Aubrey, that lay in that bed before you was cockered up in the same manner, and four days ago he was led out and shot like a dog—yea, with the good liquor yet in his mouth, and wasted. But I've no business to be here talking to a wine-bibbing son of Belial, as thou art. There be pens and ink, and paper, and candles, and profane books, and I must e'en wait on thee before sunset with more meat, and receive thy orders."

So saying, he collected his cups and platters and departed, leaving me with a plentiful supply of the important matters he had named. Provided with these great and responsible instruments, my mind became more restless than ever; small physical privations occupy the attention far more than we care to admit

into rivalry with sentimental sorrow, and when I found myself with a well-satisfied appetite, I felt more than ever the necessity of some occupation to divert sad thoughts. There lay the best implements for solitary labour, if I could use them aright—pen and paper—yea, the very means of immortality! I thought of the great and gallant Raleigh, of Galileo, of Tasso, of our own Lovelace, and felt how glorious a matter imprisonment *might* be made.

“But not for me,” I mournfully thought, as I paced up and down my narrow cell; “science, philosophy, or poetry, may well glorify the bondage of those whom they inspire; but from a rough, idle, soldier like myself, whose head and heart are full of all that he has undergone—that he is still undergoing—what material can be obtained to enlighten, or even amuse the world.

“Nevertheless,” I resumed (still keeping my eyes fixed on the momentous pen, which at length I grasped more nervously than when I first drew my maiden sword for war) “what I have undergone, thousands of my countrymen have, at least, in part, experienced; and thou-

sands to come will wish to know what an Englishman has felt and done in times like these ; what errors he has fallen into, and by what actions he has endeavoured to redeem those errors.

Again, a doubt came over me, and I laid down that tempting pen. To whom am I about to unveil the secrets of my heart—the secrets of my friends ?

Who will be the readers and the critics of what I am about to record ?

Will even those who have known me find interest in the re-awakened memories of scenes that we have shared ? Will those, to whom the writer is but a name, bestow their sympathies upon my joys and sorrows, for the sake of joys and sorrows of their own which my narration may recal ?

It may be that the former are grown too old, or cold, or changed, and that the latter will be too little touched by the strangeness of my story to lend to it a willing ear. Nevertheless, I long to unburden my memory of its load as the sick in soul to a confessor, or the ill in health to a physician. Written by my own hand,

my biography shall relate only to the dead; before any stranger shall read these lines, their author will be unconscious of the blessing of his sympathy, or the insult of his sneer. For this reason, I can,—yea, and will write to the world as freely, as fully, and as truly, as if I were pouring my confessions in the friendliest ear.

With these thoughts, I once more grasped my pen, and vehemently and hastily wrote down the above—the first words that presented themselves; fearing, if I paused to reconsider them, that such a commencement would shame me from continuance. As a young bird prepares for flight, I fluttered through these sentences, and then determined to trust myself for good or ill upon a longer flight; yea, even if my grey goose-quill should prove but an Icarian wing.

Here, then, is the history of my young life as far as it has gone; it may prove to be but a fragment and a brief one.

I am the eldest son of Reginald, Lord Hastings of Beaumanoir. His ancestors had shared in the dangers and rewards of the Norman Conquest, and for centuries since, had

rendered good and knightly service for the lands bestowed by the Conqueror. If, at any time, their title deeds had failed, the loss might have been supplied from their country's history, with which their names were interwoven. In the wars of Ireland, of the Holy Land, of France, and of the Roses, their blood had been profusely shed, and the present unhappy times found my father still ready to stand or fall by the banner of his King. Yet his was no blind, unreasoning obedience, that abandoned the right of private judgment. In his youth, he had been persecuted by King James for espousing the cause of Raleigh; in his age he had fallen under the displeasure of King Charles for a quarrel with Buckingham, and resistance to that Duke's successors in the ministry. It was only the danger of the Crown that brought him to its assistance, and re-awakened, as it were, a grateful memory, that he and his fathers owed to it their cherished home and their broad lands. In his chivalrous code of honour, the lapse of time had not weakened the obligation; he still enjoyed the reward of his ancestors' loyalty, and he conceived that he still owed

feudal and loyal gratitude for that possession.

This fidelity of my father's to the King was imitated by that of our tenants to himself. They had, for the most part, descended from the tenants of our forefathers, through lines as ancient as their own. Though leases were unknown to our rent-rolls, the same names were to be found in each farm-house through successive centuries: our people had changed from Saxon serfs to British yeomen, without ever having changed their fealty to our house. In the village, indeed, it was whispered, that the newly-popular principles had gained some ground, but many of the inhabitants there were strangers; trade and its votaries being far more liable to change and innovation than agriculture, to which they are for the most part opposed in principle if not in interest. This village stood upon the sea-shore, about half-a-mile from The Manor, as our old house was familiarly called. Our park gates opened on a large bowling-green which stood in the very heart of the little town. A tall May-pole occupied its centre, surrounded by some forty or fifty houses and

cottages, each with its gaily-painted sign-board ; or little garden and trellised arbour, if it appropriated to no public calling.

For the Manor itself, it was a house of great extent and very varied architecture. Originally a hunting-lodge of Earl Godwins, it stood on a gentle eminence in an extensive Chase, or forest, well opened into glades and meadows. The Saxon palace had been fortified with Norman towers, and surrounded by a graff, or moat, in the reign of Rufus. A royal visit from Queen Elizabeth had superinduced the addition of a banqueting-hall with other apartments ; and my grandfather, in the reign of King James, had yet further added to the confusion of all architectural rule, by an endeavour to blend the various discrepancies of his house into one uniform style.

The pride of this quaint, but venerable mansion was the entrance hall, some eighty feet in length, and in height, up to the cedar rafters, perhaps half as much. The carved oak with which it was panelled was invisible to my young eyes, though I might have seen it naked enough afterwards : in the days of peace it was covered

over with armour, and weapons of every age, from that of Alfred downwards. Its arrangement was very perfect as to time; for each helmet, morion, hauberk, or haquetin, hung upon the spot where its last wearer had placed it. This armoury was my father's pride; my brother and I learnt the history of our country, and of our ancestors, from the battered shields of Hastings, Acre, Flodden-Field, Cressy, Poitiers, and Agincourt, as from so many medals.— Alas! for the day that scattered those trophies widely over England! Alas! for the gallant yeomen friends, who left that harness only with their lives, on Edgehill, Newbury, and Chalgrove Field!

At the upper end of the old hall was a dais, on which a table stood crosswise under a huge painted window, which I fear had been sacrilegiously obtained in bluff King Harry's time. Well I remember the awe with which I used to look upon my father, as he sat enthroned at that table on the King's birthday, with his neighbours assembled round him, and his farmers seated at the long tables that ran from end to end of the great hall. Opposite

the doorway yawned a huge fire-place, over-arched by a high mantel-piece, elaborately carved and surmounted by a gallery, in which my mother and her fair guests used to appear on occasions of high solemnity, when the hall below was filled with retainers that would have died to serve her.

The rest of the old house within, was like most others of its kind: a labyrinth of galleries and staircases, and almost forgotten rooms, with which none but the oldest servants professed acquaintance. Without, behind the house, was a large court-yard, with stables for a troop of horse, and a smithy, still called the armourer's forge. There, also, were barns and granaries, and all the appurtenances of a country-house, that boasted to want nothing beyond its own power to supply. There were gardens too, and fish-ponds surmounted by a heronry, and all the various excrescences supposed necessary or comfortable, that gather round old family places, where each son preserves, with pious and hereditary care, the things that his dead father cared for.

There is a venerableness and mystery attached

to old ancestral houses such as these, that powerfully impresses the imagination. The various human experiences that those grey walls have sheltered; the bright faces that have looked out through those narrow windows; the grim sentries that have patrolled those battlemented towers; the voices of joy and mourning, of anger, of comfort, of desolation, of despair, that have sounded through those halls; the bridal trains and funeral processions that have passed through those wide doors; the startling news, now almost forgotten history, that was told round those large fire-places; the venerable forms that have reposed in that old arm-chair, the merry children that have been hushed to sleep in that old-fashioned cradle; all, within and without, may now be wholly changed, yet each has left its character impressed upon the ancient home of an ancient race.

All this is altered now, they tell me. It is many a day since I have seen my birth-place; besieging artillery and ruthless pillage since then have done their utmost to obliterate all marks of what that home was once. I am thankful that I have been spared that sight,

and that I can still picture to myself the old Manor in all its hospitable pride, when passers-by would exclaim as they pointed to it: "There lives an English gentleman of the good old time!"

Such, indeed, was my father. He stood among the first of that almost unnoticed class of country gentlemen, who form the principal strength and real power of the state. I mean unnoticed in public life only, for in the wide circle of his own neighbourhood, he possessed an honoured name and moral influence that kings might envy. To him, as a common centre, converged all the petitions, applications, and appeals of the surrounding country; to his justice, his counsel, or his generosity—the wronged, the embarrassed, and the poor, with confidence appealed; and by his opinions, ever frankly and fearlessly expressed, the public opinion of his neighbourhood was influenced, if not wholly formed.

He possessed not only the confidence, but the love of all his neighbours. There was something genial and generous in his manner that seemed infectious,—the cold and cautious warmed beneath its influence, the timid were encouraged, and the poor felt the presence of a friend.

Though he had been in his time a courtier, a soldier, and a traveller, yet my father was passionately fond of the country—its labours, its sports, and all the various interests that it yields to those who cultivate them. He had married the daughter of a noble courtier, but her tastes had become so merged in his, that neither of them ever sent a thought in search of pleasure or amusement beyond the limits of their happy home.

I must not, in speaking of that home, pass on without a tribute to the character of my mother, who rendered it a cherished sanctuary. She was of so excellent a nature that I have always respected *WOMAN* for her sake, whatever my after-experience of *women* may have been. For her sake, I have always met with scorn the fashionable sneers against married life, and been able to believe that it was in mercy God gave the first man a wife, notwithstanding the result. Yes, blessed be she—whether of Eden, or of this poor penal earth—who fulfils her mission to her husband! who soothes his sorrows, extenuates his failings, brightens his bright hours, and irradiates his darkness! No jealous vanity, no morbid

pride ever stains the pure motives of her ministry ;—her noble and self-sacrificing thought and thoughtfulness is ever of him whom God hath given her—of what will wound, of what will soothe, of what will comfort him—the father of her children, the sharer of her destiny.

Happy, thrice happy, through all his mortal misery is he who can fold such a woman to his grateful heart. Her gentleness subdues, her meekness softens him ; her patient endurance conquers more than the stormiest eloquence : her presence can enable her husband to cherish life, and yet to smile upon the death that spares him the anguish of outliving her. So thought my father, justly ; but his wife was not destined to survive him. She had long been delicate, though her illness wore that beautiful and delusive beauty, that so often in our climate only decks the victim for the tomb. But her spirits rose with her decay, and she was happy—happy in her stainless conscience, happy in all around her, and most of all, happy in her merry little child of some two years old, who was her almost constant companion.

If I thus linger on my native threshold, I

may be excused, for my after-life presents far different events. From the recollection of these last, I often seek refuge in childish memories ; they are always welcome. I am still happy in that home I have described, though for me it now exists only in imagination.

CHAPTER II.

Sweet in manner, fair in favour,
Mild in temper, fierce in fight,
Warrior nobler, gentler, braver,
Never shall behold the light.

ANON.

MY second brother, Hugo, was scarcely seventeen when my story commences. In spite of all their efforts to conceal it, he was the favourite of both our parents. I never grudged—I scarcely envied him that priceless distinction. Nor could I wonder at it; he was so gentle and generous, so brave, and good, and true. I was too proud of his genius and acquirements to feel jealous of the comparative shade in which they placed me. There was a strong contrast between us too, which served to destroy any thought of rivalry. We were both

impetuous, but Hugo was more yielding and somewhat fickle in his pursuits; I was more thoughtful and determined, and generally took up a common object where he had left it off. He was imaginative and fond of poetry; I was but little of a book-man. His spirits were inexhaustible, and there was a note of exultation in his joyous laughter that thrilled like a trumpet in my ear: yet his tears were almost as ready as his smiles, and his large bright eyes would fill, not only at the recital of any tale of sorrow, but of any noble trait of character, or gallant action.

Even the higher sources of pleasure, all exquisite sensations of mental enjoyment, produced the same effect on his finely-sensitive organization. Nevertheless, he was no whining sentimentalist, or vain, pensive dreamer. His instinct was to be ever in advance of all his comrades, whether as a student, a sportsman, or a soldier; yet his nobler nature shrank from every triumph that his genius or his daring won at the expense of others, and his self-sacrifice in abandoning his well-won prizes often passed for indifference or inconsistency.

I well remember when he was about to leave school, the eagerness with which he looked forward to the first place and prize in the concluding examination. I had then been entered at the University, and was admitted to occupy the strangers' bench together with my father and others who were interested. I think I see Hugo before me now, almost motionless at his absorbing task; so calm, indeed, that but for the perspiration that sometimes glistened on his broad white forehead, a looker-on might have supposed his mind to be as passive as his frame. In quick succession he mastered all his trials, and towards the close of the examination but one competitor remained; a boy of patient and untiring industry, the son of our village curate. The prize of the day had been a life-long object of ambition to him and to a father who had been his only tutor; for many a year the poor churchman had toiled to qualify his child for an honour that secured to him not only distinction but independence. The trial had hitherto proved how ably, as well as earnestly, the effort had been made, for his son had obtained equal marks with my far more

gifted brother. One subject alone remained to decide the victory between the two young rivals. Hugo carried away by the spirit of emulation, was unconscious of everything but his approaching triumph ; a glance at the papers was sufficient to assure him ; he raised his eyes to where we sat ; they met my father's gaze, and, in a moment, communicated this proud confidence. But at the same moment, Hugo observed the poor curate's anxious eyes making the same inquiries of *his* son's countenance ; they read no hope in the boy's embarrassed and careworn aspect. Hugo could see the old man's colour mount to his forehead, and then leave it deadly pale ; his form was bent downward, and his long lean fingers convulsively twined in one another.

To be brief, the Examiner approached ; the curate's son faltered through a few imperfect answers and was silent. Then came Hugo's turn. I was accustomed to read his thoughts in his transparent countenance, and I was not surprised to see a shade of generous sorrow for a moment struggling with a bright unconscious smile. He answered the first question as I

expected, promptly and lucidly, but then he became embarrassed, faltering and—silent. Finally, and with evident reluctance, the Examiner pronounced him beaten, and the next moment, forgetful of all ceremony, the curate clasped his son to his sobbing, but exulting heart.

At first my father's face flushed with bitter, if not angry disappointment; but he soon read something in Hugo's look that changed his mood. "I see it all, my generous boy," he whispered, as he pressed the young scholar's hand; "I see it all, and I thank you from my soul for the decision that you made; one such victory over yourself is worth a thousand over others." Hugo returned the pressure of his father's hand, but, from that time forth, no word or sign escaped him that could tarnish his young rival's triumph.

I select this circumstance from a thousand others equally characteristic of my brother, rather because it recalls a happy period of our lives, than because it is remarkable in itself. During the autumn following this

examination—three years before the war broke out—Hugo and I were both at home. Every life, as well as every nation, seems to have its Augustan era—and this was ours. Everything seemed to prosper with us, and to promise a long continuance of happiness. My mother's health, that had long been delicate, now seemed to rally; the King appeared inclined to wiser councils, and had consented to call a Parliament; the harvest promised an abundant yield, and the nation's pulse beat prosperously high. Then was my father as proud as well as a happy man, with his two sons, whose only rivalry was displayed in pleasing him. The danger that he had long apprehended for the throne appeared averted; he had sanguine hopes of the new Parliament, to which he had succeeded in returning his best friend as member for the county.

I must confess, however, that few of these higher considerations had much weight with Hugo and myself in those days. We were in the glorious morning of life, whose sunshine turns every object into gold; what imagination

painted, hope strove to realize, and made amends for every failure by raising new illusions. Independently, too, of all the pleasures that are common to every young and healthy boy, we had almost every indulgence that could render our lives a holiday. My father, as fond of field-sports as ourselves, took pleasure in providing us with the best horses, the keenest falcons, the staunchest hounds, the steadiest dogs. As an old soldier, he took pride in seeing us the surest shots, the best fencers, and the boldest riders in all the country's side. He was a zealous supporter of village sports, moreover, and all neighbourly meetings, and we thus became early acquainted with all our countryfolk. Among these there were few who belonged to our own station in life, but those two who alone possessed deep interest for us would have concentrated our affection if the world had been their rivals.

Our nearest neighbour was Sir Janus Demiroy, one of King James's newly-invented baronets, the purchase of whose titles an old knight pronounced to be "the very simony of honour." The father of Sir Janus, a wealthy

goldsmith of London, had purchased a large property, only separated from ours by a river that opened on the sea. The residence of the Demiroyes was scarcely half-a-mile from Beaumanoir at low tide, when the boundary river could be crossed by means of stepping-stones. This residence was very characteristic of its owner, the nearest desire of whose heart was to be on good terms with both King and Demagogue. It had changed its name with its appearance, and was now called Castle Bifrons, in place of the good old Elizabethan manor-house of Saxonbury.

Sir Janus had begun to build during the palmy and unquestioned days of royalty, and Inigo Jones had been encouraged to lavish on the southern front the most graceful and noble resources of his art; loyal emblems were profusely distributed among the decorations, flourishing round the family crest, a chameleon. A broad terrace, spreading to the sun, gave the mansion a very courtly air: two long strips of a very gay garden ran along beneath this terrace, and were flanked by plantations of thick laurel. Over this favoured space, flocks of pigeons were

constantly careering, and pompous peacocks strutted below as if it was their own domain.

The northern front, however, of Castle Bifrons had been completed after the new power of the Puritans had displayed itself, and no contrast could be stronger than that exhibited between this recent building and the former one. It consisted indeed of nothing but a flat brick face, parsimoniously pierced with narrow windows, not an ornament, not even a mullion, could be there detected. In front of it was a square space of close-cropped turf, surrounded, as by a wall, with tall stiff dark trees; and varied only by formal gravel walks. The sun never shone upon the high and narrow hall door that opened out upon these solemn precincts, and there was never seen a living thing that could regret his absence. No bird was ever known to sing, or grasshopper to chirp there: some dismal old rooks, with a few pensive owls and bats, were the only creatures that voluntarily addicted themselves to what Sir Janus considered the true Puritanical taste in architecture and landscape gardening.

Sir Janus would fain have passed his life in

peace and quietness in some central apartment, standing neutral between these two discordant aspects of his mansion. But in his anxiety to avoid giving offence to either party, he found himself encumbered with many difficulties. His Cavalier acquaintances were necessarily welcomed for the sake of old times that might return; the Puritan for the sake of new times that might continue. When the former arrived, they were directed by the lodge-keeper to take the southern approach; when the latter appeared, they were requested to take the northern. At the south front, Lady Demiroy arrayed in rich taffeta and starched lace was waiting to do the honours of the castle; at the north, Sir Janus, dressed in drab garments of the plainest form, received his guests meekly as one who desired to be all things unto all men. That desirable object was becoming daily more difficult, however; so that the Baronet had at length relieved himself a little by leaning towards the Puritans. He felt safer in doing so, as he was married to the sister of a zealous royalist; and this clever lady made the most of her brother's politics in the

presence of the King's supporters, though always (theoretically) open to conviction when any important Puritan attempted her conversion. Her Ladyship had, in short, adopted the politics of Sir Janus, and the household only *seemed* to be divided against itself in order that it might stand, whatever were the storms of the state.

This well-suited couple, so wise in their generation, had but two children, and these were fortunately daughters. A son might, perhaps, by some bias of his own, have inconvenienced the family politics, and destroyed the trim of the vessel which the parents laboured so assiduously to preserve. But daughters had no right to exercise independent opinions, even if they possessed any.

CHAPTER III.

One came with light and laughing air,
And cheeke like opening blossome ;
Bright gemmes were twined amid her haire,
And glittered on her bosome ;
And gold and costlie jewells deck
Her round white arms and snowy neck,
And pride and joy are in her eye,
And mortalls bowed as she past bye.

Another came ; o'er her milde face
A pensive shade was stealing,
Yet there no grief of earth wee trace,
But that deep holie feeling
That mourns the harte should ever straye
From the pure fount of truth awaye,
And hope and faith were in her eye,
And angells bowed as she passed bye.

ZILLAH and Phoebe Demiroy were just emerging from woman's brief childhood at the time

of which I speak. They had slept in the same cradle, been lulled to sleep by the same songs, played the same plays under the shadow of the same old trees, yet were they different as night from morning. Every hour in developing the features of the mind and body, rendered the increasing contrast between them more striking. Zillah had all the deep and solemn beauty of the former; Phœbe, all the hopeful bloom and joyous brightness of the latter. My brother and I had grown up in almost daily intercourse with these fair girls. Without lingering on our childhood's experiences, I shall only say that when our ripening years gave form and strength to our passions, we loved our young companions with an entire affection. If I dare speak for them, I should say that they then felt almost as much for us. They had found in us, in our anxious services, in our proud protection, all the requirements of brothers; and we were indebted to them for the social refinement and instinct of courtesy that usually sisters alone can teach, or unconsciously inspire. The progress of my affection would be as difficult to trace as the ripening of the bud through blos-

som and flower to the tempting fruit. But ever, as that fruit became more exquisitely desirable, it seemed also to become more distant and unattainable : it is the nature of enthusiastic youth to stand in awe of imaginary difficulties, while those that are real, it proudly tramples under foot and scorns. Thus there was nothing in my position with respect to Zillah, but Zillah's self that was likely to prove an obstacle to my highest hopes, and I no more doubted her love than I did mine own.

Nevertheless, there was something in her look and manner that struck me—almost with awe. Even in childhood, her aspect had always worn a certain mournful expression that seemed to plead for sympathy with her imaginary sorrow. As she grew older, whether some real sorrow, or the mystic and religious studies to which she was then devoted, had increased her melancholy ; she became daily more thoughtful and retired, and even Phœbe complained that she was changed. I often then wished that I could have assumed Hugo's pensive and imaginative character, as being more consonant to hers, but perhaps I was mistaken. When the

merry and bright-minded Phœbe gave that preference to my thoughtful and poetical brother, which her more imaginative sister gave to me, perhaps each found a truer sympathy than the superficial eye of strangers could detect.

I was full of faults and errors, which an impetuous character, and too unrestrained an education had made rampant over some honest but humble qualities of good. Zillah seemed to feel that she had a mission to convert and enoble my rugged nature, and in our early years she strove to read, and watched earnestly over my wayward heart; when it became her own, she perhaps shrank from the difficulty of what was then self-knowledge.

At all events, she gradually estranged herself from an intimacy which to me seemed as necessary as the air I breathed. When I was in her company, she no longer extended to me the timid but affectionate confidence that I had shared so long. Ensconced behind her embroidered frame, or apparently studying some gloomy volume of Genevese binding, she only spoke to me from time to time as to a mere visitor, and then relapsed into silence. The sole

indemnification, if I can call it so, that I received for this sad change was, that it seemed to be accompanied by a sense of self-sacrifice. Calm and motionless as she sat, my eager eye could detect the throbbing of her heart when I approached her, and when some chance expression or sudden exclamation induced her for a moment to raise her eyes, their glorious light was often half quenched in tears.

I was no sentimentalist then, whatever I may be now. If anything of that nature is discoverable in my story, it has been acquired in scenes where most men lose any that they once possessed; in wars and trials, and suffering and sorrows, that have inspired me with some doubt as to what is truly real or ideal in this world of strange illusions. I was no sentimentalist, at all events, at the time I write of, but a downright, wilful, impetuous boy, to whom it seemed that all things must perforce yield, as my horses and even my schoolfellows had done; nay, even the stormy sea that foamed along our iron bound coast had failed to conquer me, and in more than one stout struggle for my life had been compelled to bear me safely to the shore.

With my boyish love had grown up a fierce ambition to win a name and fame by any means, that could render me worthy of her, a girl of sixteen, before whom her aspiring knight now stood shame-faced, and embarrassed by her embarrassment.

Each time that I left Zillah's presence, I resolved to ask for an explanation the next time that she was alone; but that was seldom now. I did not indeed feel restraint from the presence of Hugo and Phœbe, who were generally seated together in some deep set window niche; and there the merry maiden would sometimes be won to momentary silence by some of his strange stories; or the sound of his voice would be broken into fragments by her laughter; or some poem, as rapidly as uttered, would be travestied by her in whose praises it had been carefully composed. But such company as these happy creatures afforded, seemed no longer to suffice to Zillah. If her mother was not present, either her Ladyship's chaplain, or the dark-browed Puritan, who filled the same (honorary) office for Sir Janus—was surely there. Sometimes, however, I must confess that one or all of these were sufficiently distant to afford a

temporary privacy ; but then Zillah's quick perception anticipated my intention, and by some quiet but ingenious words, and still more by a look of irresistible appeal, she would again defeat my boyish resolution.

One pure taste of happiness in her love I experienced, and that was about a year before my story formally opens. We had merged so imperceptibly from childhood into youth, that no restriction upon our intimacy had even suggested itself. Our leisure hours were still passed together ; and, hawking or hunting, or strolling by the sea-shore, the delicate, but noble form of Zillah could seldom be seen unattended by a tall, strong, active stripling, whose earnest eyes watched every glance of hers, whose eager ears drank in the sound of every word she uttered. Yes ! those were supremely happy days, in which I wandered by my Zillah's side, brightened with the glorious dawn of youth, and love, and hope ; and listening with smiling incredulity to her grave warnings, that this was a world of trial, not of indulgence or reward.

“ And if storms *should* close over the summer of our life,” I said to her one evening, as we wandered by the sea-shore, “ they will

but enoble and dignify our career, when bravely borne. One short hour ago, yon sea was calm as thy heart, shining and azure as thine eyes ; now that the sudden gale has changed it into a passion of foam and purple, it is grander and more glorious, if less lovely than before.”

“And behold the consequence !” cried Zillah, clasping her hands in dread, but still clinging to her argument.

As she spoke, I saw a tall ship unmanageably flying before the wind, her torn sails streamed wildly in the blast ; and then, soon after, she became visible above the waves, she struck upon the sands. The wind, blowing right on shore brought to our ears the hoarse commands of the stout captain, the shrieks of women, the confused and struggling sounds of hardy men struggling for their lives. Two boats were hastily lowered, filled with living beings, and almost instantly overwhelmed. Still the waves ran higher, and seemed more ravenous for their prey as the good ship stood at bay, and bravely, for awhile, resisted every wave. At length there was a momentary lull, and then a wilder gush of wind and waters. The sea foamed

high over the tall spars, and as it swept along left not a trace behind it.

When the ship first burst on our view so suddenly, I stood rivetted by surprise, and still more by the pressure of Zillah's hand upon my arm. But I soon flung off my cloak, and rushed to a small boat that lay sheltered in a creek of calm water within the promontory. Hugo then came up and eagerly assisted me, but I would not permit him to venture with me into such a surf: brave as a lion in all other circumstances, he had always had a horror of the sea, and had never learned to swim: it was my favourite recreation, and the waves had been my choice playmates almost from infancy. By the time we had got the boat ready, pieces of the ship and more than one lifeless and mangled form had been dashed in upon the shore adjoining to where the little boat still lay, scarcely rocked by the eddy of the waters that raged so fiercely a few yards off. As I was about to leap from the shore, Zillah, for a moment, held me back, but quickly recovering herself, exclaimed,

“Then go! you would never forgive me if I

stayed you. May He—" the rest of her voice was drowned by the wind that now roared wildly; the waves foamed high and redly in the sun's last rays, and a ghastly and bruised body came rolling into the calm water as if to rest—"I may soon lie like that!" was a thought that rushed through my mind, and through Zillah's too, I thought, for as I pressed her to my heart, I could feel hers beating wildly, and she scarcely strove to free herself from my ecstatic embrace: then she shrank back, and I leaped on board the boat, nerved with supernatural strength, and shoved away. Away! among the breakers, and the little craft raised its bows to meet and mount an overwhelming wave; with a strong sweep of the oars I urged her over, or rather through the curling surge, and shot down the slope of waters beyond; the next wave nearly turned the boat over, and the third fairly swamped her.

I was defeated in my hopes of reaching the wreck, but I saw near me a young figure striking out bravely, though evidently failing fast—another languid struggle, and he sank, swept beneath the horrible waves by the undertow. I plunged from the light I scarce hoped

to see again, and caught the now lifeless form ; then rose upon a breaking wave, and struck out desperately for the shore. Again, and again, I was dragged back by the resistless force of the surf, and almost drowned by the boiling spray ; but the thought that Zillah was looking on, that Zillah was there to welcome me, nerved me for every fresh attempt—and at length I conquered—one long sweeping wave bore me onward on its crest, and then dashed me with my prize upon the beach. Stunned by the shock, I could yet feel myself dragged backwards by the returning stream as I lost all power to resist it. But Hugo, though he could not swim, rushed into the water, and seized me ; I was saved, and my prize, in whose hair my grasp had fastened with drowning tenacity, was also rescued from destruction.

By this time numbers of people had arrived from the village ; they did what they could to be of service to the crew of the lost ship ; but their care was vain. For hours and days corpse after corpse continued to be washed upon the coast, but mine was the only stranger saved alive.

Meanwhile, I had lain with my unconscious

head on Zillah's knee, while she chafed my temples with her delicate hands: the first consciousness of returning life I felt was that of her soft warm tears upon my cheek. I *would* not waken from that happy trance, until I saw poor Hugo's face bent over mine in agonized suspense, and then I started up, and in a few minutes was myself again. But Zillah and Phœbe (who was there too) were hastened away by fears of alarming the castle, for it was now late: as Zillah turned away, her parting glance stirred my heart with the almost only proud pleasure it was destined to receive.

Although much bruised, the poor fellow I had dragged ashore was little injured, and after a night's rest was able to render an account of himself. He was an orphan, he believed; born, as well as he knew, in Ireland; of his parents he knew almost nothing, but he maintained that his father had been some Irish king. He himself had been lost or stolen when an infant, and brought up by pirates, whose vessel some years after had been captured by a royal frigate. The pirates had been all hanged or transported to the settlements, and Bryan, as my protégé called himself, had been adopted by the captain

of the ship that took the pirates. He had followed his new friend ashore, been educated as one of his family, and, with the exception of an Irish accent and style of expression, he might, at this time, have passed for a most intelligent English school-boy. His friend, the captain, dying, he was cast upon the world, and had entered the ill-fated ship as a passenger, to work his way from Hull to the new settlements in America. For the first day they had had fine weather; the next, whilst running along the coast, under a press of sail, they had been overtaken by the sudden storm, capsized, driven ashore, and Bryan remained the only survivor out of a crew of twenty sailors, besides many passengers.

For the first few days after his deliverance, the poor boy seemed appalled and saddened by the scenes he had witnessed, but his buoyant spirit soon rose above all care, and when he found himself instilled as my page, his delight knew no bounds, and he swore by some comical oath that "the storm was one of the best friends he had." From that time forward he was the most faithful follower that ever served for gratitude. Whatever were my pursuits, he

adapted himself to them with wonderful versatility, and on the mountain, by the stream, in the hall, or by the covert, he was ever at my side, with a watchfulness that nothing could escape, and an activity that no exertion could fatigue.

And, meanwhile, where was Zillah? The day after the shipwreck, she had left the Castle to visit Colonel Hutchinson's family in Nottinghamshire, and I soon afterwards went to London on business of my father's. For some reason, he never went thither himself. When I returned home, Zillah was also returned to the castle, but her absence had wrought in her a further change. She had become more thoughtful than ever, and whether it was some maidenly fancy of having shown too deep an interest in my escape, or that some other subject now occupied her thoughts, I know not. She had been always unlike other girls of her age:—was that provoking, yet interesting originality to increase with her years!

CHAPTER IV.

Methought the billows spoke and told me of it :
The winds did sing it to me.

SHAKESPERE.

ONE memorable day—the last of my bright, joyous, thoughtless youth—I went with Hug to the castle to take my leave, previous to an absence of some months ; the next morning, I was to return to the University. A bright and beautiful day it was. Autumnal tints were already scattered among the woods on the promontory. The river sparkled brightly among the green meadows, and the sands, left naked by the tide, shone like embossed gold. Owing to the steepness of the valley that divides our grounds from those of the castle, the easiest way to the latter lay along the sands, over which a dry passage was afforded

by a long line of massive stepping-stones, through which the river flowed. This passage was only interrupted at high tide, but that tide came in so suddenly (as at the neighbouring "Wash" of Lincoln) that no human step could evade it if once overtaken. There was, however, but little use made of the passage, and its danger was only traditional; the last accident having happened a long while ago.

Thither we now bent our steps. My mother and her little child had accompanied us as far as her strength permitted, and when she left us to return, Hugo begged hard to have his little playfellow to take with him. I have already noticed the delight he took in the company of this child, who returned all his affection in his own silent little way, and now eagerly extended his arms to be taken up. My mother reluctantly assented to Hugo's wish, and he bore off his prize in triumph, entertaining him with snatches of old songs, to which his charge kept time with his hands, and uttered every now and then shrill musical cries of pleasure.

So we went buoyantly along. For the twentieth time, I was determined to have an explanation with Zillah, which, when I recalled all the scenes of our sweet childhood, I could not doubt would prove all that I desired. I was on the point of leaving her and home; but youthful hope and aspiration made the prospect of a new career delightful, and bore me forward to the hope of a happy meeting soon. Even if I had been inclined to despondency, however, the merry laughter of the child, and Hugo's exuberant spirit would have forced me to be cheerful. There was no happier brotherhood in merry England on that fine morning.

As we passed the stepping-stones, Hugo walked some paces on the dry sands to collect shells for his little playfellow, and I believe he would have stayed there, but for my eagerness to reach the castle. At length I persuaded him to leave the shore, and we reached our destination without any incident.

We found Zillah and Phoebe in the library, alone; but for the Puritan, who was occupied

in a corner with a book. We were welcomed eagerly by Phœbe, and kindly, but calmly, by her sister. They had seen us from the window crossing over the sands, and Phœbe took her young lover to task for having lingered by the way. Hugo pleaded the child's pleasure as his excuse, and as its soft little fingers were now twined in her long ringlets, and its little rosy lips were eloquent with its own inarticulate language, its plea as well as Hugo's was allowed.

“And now,” said the latter, “I must not stay. I have promised my mother to restore her treasure within an hour, and she is coming down to the sands to meet us; so good bye!”

I scarcely observed his departure. I was absorbed in watching Zillah, who sat at her embroidery frame more pale than ever, and, if possible, more silent. I have but a confused idea of what passed; I moved about the room irresolutely. I approached her several times, and as often retreated. I asked Phœbe some question, and, without waiting for her answer, proposed the same question to her sister.

She replied without raising her eyes from her work, and I almost felt a sensation of anger and impatience towards her. I was resolved to take advantage of the temporary strength of mind that feeling gave, and I approached to take my leave. Her hand trembled, I believe, for part of the embroidery frame, at which she was working, fell to the ground; in endeavouring to pick it up, our hands met; it was the first time for months. That soft, warm touch in a moment dissolved the spell that bound me. I grasped her hand passionately, and, in a tone that sounded strange to my own ears, exclaimed :

“Zillah, for once and for ever tell me—”
The fall of a ponderous volume, and a step close behind her, made the trembling girl start from her chair and look round. The Puritan chaplain turned at the same moment, as if to apologize for his inadvertence; but, as he stooped to pick up his accursed book, I thought I read an expression of stern, but momentary reproof in his dark and fiery eyes. Zillah, however, took no notice, or seemed to take none, of him, or of the circumstance that had

caused his interruption. She rose from her chair, asked me some common-place question about the time of my departure, wished me kindly farewell, and glided from the room.

I was left alone with the Puritan, who appeared so absorbed in the examination of the book-shelf, that not a symptom of any other thought was visible on his pale, impassive countenance. I had never seen one of his class so near before, and I now gazed upon him with a mixture of curiosity, jealousy, and indignation. He had been one of those churchmen who preached against the Church, at least, against what Archbishop Laud conceived to be the true church doctrines. He had been expelled from his living on this account, and forbidden to preach in England under heavy penalties. Sir Janus, therefore, had offered him an asylum, moved to that act of generosity, not only by observing that popular feeling was much excited in the schismatic's favour, but in consonance with his own new reforming arrangements. His high-church chaplain required some equipoise, and Hezekiah Doom was installed in the office of French preceptor to

the young ladies of Castle Bifrons. For this office, a long residence at Geneva had qualified the divine, and the rarity of his accomplishment accounted for the conduct of Sir Janus in the eyes of most royalists.

Not so, however, in the eyes of Mistress Phœbe: she hated or adored every living creature that came within the ken of her ardent spirit, with a sincerity very trying to her parent. Phœbe held the King in enthusiastic reverence, and proportionably detested the Puritans, and every man, or measure, that was opposed to the royal will. The Rev. Mr. Doom was her especial object of dislike; not only because he was in her eyes a downright rebel, and little better than a heretic, but because he was a sort of rival to her dear old chaplain, who had christened and catechized, comforted, and counselled her in all the little sorrows, and difficulties that her young life had ever known. Hugo, of course, had been inoculated with Phœbe's distaste for the Puritan teacher, and had pictured him, in his imagination, as a mixture of Calvinist, Jesuit, and devil.

The little that I had heard of the divine was,

accordingly, not much to his advantage, but I was forced to confess that his appearance impressed me favourably, even at the moment of my angry disappointment. If his frame wanted elasticity, it was nobly formed, and the energy that ought to have animated it seemed not dead, but dormant: the stoop so habitual to students, diminished his apparent height, yet he bore himself bravely, as one who had resisted and dared much, and would have done so, even at the martyr's stake. His dress was of the sternest simplicity, and suited well with the ascetic character of his countenance: the blackness of his long, lank hair made that of his coat look faded, and gave strong effect to the marble whiteness of his high forehead. His other features were well formed and attractive, notwithstanding their severity; but his eyes were peculiarly remarkable, and the most distinguishing features of his face. I can only describe them as being *lurid*, a strange mixture of gloom and fire that defied every attempt to detect their colour.

All these observations I made afterwards;

for the moment, I only darted on my disturber an indignant glance, which produced no more effect than lightning upon ice. Some words, very different from a benediction, had almost escaped me, but they were checked, half uttered, by the meekness of the man, and by my consciousness of his inability to resent them. I turned on my heel, and moved towards Phœbe, who had retired to another window from that at which Hugo left her.

“There,” she exclaimed, with pouting lips, “there is that ungentle brother, so hasty to be gone from here; and he no sooner reached the sands than he sat down to play with that little darling child that he loves a thousand times better than he does me—after all!”

“Nay,” said I, “my sweet Phœbe, “you know how prone he is to self-sacrifice, and it was only to keep his word with my poor mother that he tore himself away; he was to await her at the shore. Would that I had only such cause of complaint against —” I was interrupted by a fearful cry from the Puritan.

“God of my fathers—the tide!” he exclaimed, as he sprang out of the window upon the lawn, and darted away towards the fatal passage with lightning speed.

What was his speed to mine, when I beheld the fearful sight that had so moved him! The tide was pouring in breast high, and had already filled both channels on either side of the bank where Hugo had been lying in fatal security; the sea was perfectly, awfully calm—only a slight foam crested the oncoming and gigantic wave that had not time to fall, so swiftly was it rushing. For a moment I saw my loved brother start to his feet; he held the child high in air with one hand, and with the other he seemed instinctively to try to stem the tide. Fearful picture of weakness against omnipotence! it lasted but one second: then, the high wave rolled on, and left behind it a calm, deep silvery channel, beneath whose unbroken surface my brothers lay whelmed. A spasm of pain for an instant prostrated my strength, but its revulsion swelled my heart with the strength and daring of a thousand men. Bounding away

over turf and fence and crags, I felt as if borne through the air ; it was but a quarter of a mile to what was now the sea, and in less time than it takes to tell it, I had plunged beneath the surface. My strength and powers seemed multiplied supernaturally, I shot through the waters by mere volition, and my eyes detected every object on the sands. But once I raised my head, to measure the distance from the shore, and then again diving, I beheld a sight that will never, never leave my memory.

Hugo's body lay stretched among some rocks, half mantled with sea-weed, from which his arms emerged, stretched towards the child that seemed just torn from his grasp : its poor little body lay, as if softly sleeping, upon the smooth yellow sands, its little hands extended towards the bright world above, from which it had been snatched so suddenly. For a moment I hovered in suspense over those two forms, and then, in pity to poor Hugo, judging for him by myself, I first caught the child in my arms, rose to the surface, and struck out for the shore with desperate energy.

“If the child be dead,” I thought, “of what good will Hugo’s life be to him!” I reached the land, there were already people there—my mother too, but she had fainted.

“He may live yet, my blessed baby!” exclaimed the poor child’s nurse, as I placed his little body in her arms.

I waited for no more. “Thank God!” I shouted wildly, as again I plunged into the sea, and struck out for Hugo’s cold resting place; but I was too late. My hope had been anticipated; the Puritan, though outstripped, had followed me closely, even when I dived, and was already bearing my brother’s body to the shore.

I will not linger on the moments of agonizing suspense that passed, while people strove to resuscitate the two rescued forms. I will not attempt to describe my feelings, as I saw a faint streak of colour dawn momentarily into the child’s white cheek, then vanish—and for ever.

I will not dwell upon the recovery of Hugo, so long protracted, so mournful. It takes but

a few sad words to tell that the child was soon joined in death by his broken-hearted mother : when wrapt in her cold arms, within the self-same shroud, the happy infant was laid beside her in the grave.

CHAPTER V.

I shall grieve down this blow.

—— Learn, good soul,
To think our former state a happy dream,
From which awakened, the truth of what we are
Shows us but this : I am sworn, sister, sweet.

SHAKESPERE.

OUR house of mourning was fearfully changed from the aspect in which it had lately presented itself. Hugo, so long its life and spirit, now lay languishing in dangerous illness. I too had suffered severely from my excitement on the first day of our sorrow, and been sick almost to death. I believe it was fever that so prostrated me, and for many days shrouded me from misery in insensibility. My father was left alone to wander from one sick-bed to

another, a mere ghost of his former self, through the silent scenes of his departed happiness. When, at length, Hugo and I were pronounced out of danger and permitted to meet once more, we seemed to awaken to another state of being. We had left a world of happiness and hope: we revived to one of misery.

There is no use in dwelling on sorrows that if none can paint, none can comprehend but those who have experienced them. These last need no reminding of the change that comes over us as regards all heaven and earth to the bereaved mourner. "The soul refuses comfort," which indeed is but a mockery when our whole life seems darkened—when our sorrow seems precious to us—and we clasp it to our hearts, as the war-horse presses on the spear that pierced him.

Hugo rose from his bed of sickness a mere shadow of his former self. The fire from his eye, the colour from his cheek, the elasticity of his tread—all were gone. His form was bent under the weight of grief; his voice had lost its cheerful music, and sounded hollow when he spoke. He seemed to wish only for solitude, and would sit for hours in his lonely

chamber, gazing, with strange fascination, on the fatal sea.

My poor father was still more changed, but he strove bravely against despondency. He thought it unmanly to yield beneath the pressure of his calamity: he even bore himself with a sad cheerfulness, especially in Hugo's presence, and a stranger might have supposed that he scarcely missed the wife of his bosom—the child of his old age.

This did not last long, however; his affections were stronger than his pride or his philosophy, and he began to give way under his trial at the time when we almost hoped he would have begun to recover from its effects. The winter's chill fell heavily on his weakened frame, and he was soon confined altogether to his room; not ailing, or at least not complaining, but unnerved, and unhappy, as he was wont to say, in his uselessness. The daily progress of public events were also such as to increase his despondency. The long-hoped for parliament had met, and at once assumed an attitude hostile to the King: too hostile, in my father's opinion, though their sense of public grievances, as they were

called, was scarcely more acute or indignant than his own. In one important aspect he widely differed from the prevailing party: his reverence for the person and the office of the King was inviolable.

But before I enter into the stirring scenes that so soon followed the dissolution of the Short Parliament, I must return to the young inmates of the castle, on whom our calamity had fallen with little less severity than on ourselves. Sir Janus and his wife were kind rather than otherwise, and sympathized, after their fashion, with our sorrow. At the same hour precisely, every day, their messenger arrived, "with their service, and to know how it fared with all at the Manor;" and once a fortnight, a great coach, drawn by four stout horses, dragged her ladyship to our door to make the same inquiries in person. But she was a notable housewife, and seldom stirred from home, where the buttery and various store-rooms, and every department within and without the castle found her in constant occupation. Sir Janus had been attending parliament, the Puritan divine had disappeared two days after his important and brave service

to us, and the young ladies were left almost entirely to themselves and the old chaplain. But for a long time I had seen nothing of them.

There is something in sorrow which sublimates our feelings; crushing all the petty interests and vain fancies that occupy our lighter moments, and concentrating our thoughts upon their higher aims. Our duties stand out in bold and prominent relief, as our rootless joys are withered from among them: even love, if it be but a fancy, shares that fate; but if a passion, it grows strong, and flourishes in the absence or the silence of all others; at least I found it so. To Zillah alone my thoughts ever wandered from my desolate home, and found refuge, comfort, counsel, in her imaginary presence. Her image had ever been blended with all my prospects and ambition, and it now became identified with the sorrow in which they were all absorbed. In brighter days she had appeared to me as the angel of chivalry; she was now to me what "Nuestra Señora de los Dolores" is to the devout Spaniard.

My departure from home had of course

been postponed, and several weeks had elapsed before I ventured to leave poor Hugo's side. My first excursion was to the castle. No one could approach its gates without having been perceived, and I was therefore surprised to find Zillah alone. My surprise was increased when she came forward to welcome me, kindly and frankly, as in our earlier days. She had evidently prepared herself to do so with self-possession, but when my sorrow-stricken and changed appearance struck her view, she forgot all her determinations, and, bursting into tears, she sank down upon the window-seat, without attempting to withdraw the hand so eagerly clasped by mine.

It was long before I spoke, fearing to break the spell that, for the moment, won for me such sympathy. I could have gazed for ever on her spiritual and sublime beauty—a beauty that appealed not only to the senses but the soul, and raised my admiration into homage. Now she seemed lovelier than ever; the usually meek and unconscious expression of her countenance was touched with tenderness,

and betrayed feelings that could not and would not altogether be subdued. Young and inexperienced as I was, I felt the importance of that moment; but I know not whether it was instinct or despair that made me clasp the weeping girl to my heart. I dare not say that she lingered for a moment there, but certainly it was not ungently that she freed herself, and assumed an attitude of calm and unpretending dignity. I anticipated her first words: I pleaded timidly but passionately the revulsion of feelings, long sorrow-stricken and suppressed, that had burst from my control involuntarily, and thus revealed themselves.

“Zillah!” I continued, “I know you well, and I know that from this moment I must be to you either a stranger, or that which I do not dare to name, until I shall have proved myself such as you shall never blush to own. No boyish impulse dictates these proud words and prouder hope; such as I am, you have made me—such as I shall be, you will have caused me to become. You have been ever my hope, my ambition, my inspiration: and

you must henceforth be my guardian angel or destroyer.”

I went on speaking rapidly, for I feared her reply; I recalled our childhood with all its tender incidents; I spoke of her changed manner, and distant coldness, and even ventured to recal the circumstances of the fearful day when we had met last, and then, as I thought, had separated for a long time to come.

While thus I indemnified myself for past silence and restraint, Zillah stood with averted face, leaning her forehead on her hand. When at length I ceased, she looked round upon me with a countenance from which every trace of emotion had been banished, and with a somewhat tremulous voice that soon grew firm, she replied,

“Reginald, my friend, my brother,—let me still call you so—let me still think you so. You see I am not angry with you: it was natural, after your great sorrow, that you should feel strong emotion in sharing a sister’s sympathy, and your ardent imagination has exaggerated your kind thoughts of me—nay, has put upon them a construction that you and I must both

forget.—Do not interrupt me, I entreat you—you know not how much it has cost me to undergo this necessary interview before we part. Yes! we part, and as far as human judgment can foretel, there will be trying times and many changes ere we meet again—if ever that may be.—I pray you, hear me patiently.—Your long and loving kindness to me deserves my confidence, and, painful as it may prove to both of us, you shall hear the reasons of my past and future conduct. I do not fear misconstruction from you, or that you will think it unmaidenly in one so young as I am to speak to you with all the candour that your affection for me deserves.”

Thus far Zillah spoke firmly, as if it had been a set task to her to do so. The modulations of her musical voice, however, betrayed emotions that their mere tenor contradicted; so that, chilly as were her words, their sound soothed me in spite of the stern sense they were intended to convey.

“Reginald,” she continued, after a slight pause, “you know my father’s feelings, or rather want of feelings, on the subject of the dissen-

sions in Church and State that now agitate our dear country. You know how you used to laugh at me for being absorbed in strangely grave books, instead of the gay stories that once charmed you and Phœbe and us all, when we used to sit together under the old beechen bower. But somehow, when I was quite alone ; when—when—you were away at school, and Phœbe was occupied with her fairy-tales or music, and my father with everything—except me—at such times I used to find time hang so heavily on my hands, that nothing but setting myself a task could divert my dulness, or keep my thoughts from wandering”—(here Zillah sighed, but added quickly)—“from wandering unprofitably. With this view, I possessed myself of one of the controversies with which Sir Janus endeavours to ‘preserve himself from prepossession on either sides,’ as he says ; I read that book, at first patiently, then with interest, and, finally, with eagerness. I fear,” she added, with a melancholy smile, “that in some things I am carried away by my fancies as easily as you are, and my first sympathies with the stern and high-souled Puritans were merely what I

should have felt for heroes in our old romances. I soon began to examine their tenets for myself, and the majestic simplicity of their spiritualized form of faith and worship strongly impressed my imagination. I compared their political principles with those of which even *I* had heard some complaint, and a veil seemed to fall from my eyes. I saw our glorious country, and its generous, manly people abandoned to the despotic will of the bigot Laud, the renegado Stafford, and a Machiavellian King. Nay, do not start; I only tell you what my prejudices led me to believe. I inquired of Sir Janus, if these things were true; he told me, 'that there was a great deal to be said on both sides,' and at last he decided that 'young maidens ought not to occupy their heads with such matters.' But it was my heart, and not my head that was now interested; the sublimity of the question, as it seemed to me, fascinated my thoughts. Why had I been taught to feel with Luther and Calvin, if religious freedom was not the birth-right of the soul? Why had I learned to admire the struggles of the Greek, and Roman, and the Swiss, and the Palatines, if civil liberty was not

the first of earthly blessings? Then Mr. Hampden's cause came on: he appeared to me as the Leonidas, or rather the Luther of the cause, for which, like them, he seemed to be created, in order to make the first great stand. In short, you will be shocked, my brother; but I was become what they would call a Puritan in religion, and a rebel in political belief. Yes! but it would little signify what a mere girl like me thought of such things, but for the effect that her belief produced upon her life, and perhaps on that of others.

“ You know how anxiously my father has maintained his connection with our cousin Hutchinsons, on account of their influence with the new popular leaders; you know how I used to shrink from my yearly visit to them in London, in their dark, dull street, while Phoebe was delighted to find herself with our courtly kinswoman, the Lady Carlisle. This last year, however, I looked forward to London with interest and pleasure. I longed ardently to see and hear the great reformers, of whom I had thought so much. Mr. Pym and Mr. Holles, nay, Mr. Hampden himself, were often at my kinsman's

house, and I hoped in such society to enlighten my doubts, and inform my understanding. I was disappointed; I scarcely ever saw any of these celebrated men, except for a moment. They were always full of important affairs, and closeted, when they came, with my uncle. Many persons, also, who were said to belong to the Court party, formed part of these assemblies, and amongst these was the wise and good Lord Falkland. He seemed however, to my great surprise, tolerated rather than liked by the patriot party, and his attempts at general reconciliation were but coldly received. When this young lord was present, there were no closetings, and I often sat unnoticed in the room during his conversations with other guests. One day he was speaking with great asperity against the bishops, and he found on this subject a most willing audience. Mr. Pym, with great ingenuity, contrived to lead him on in argument, until at length he appeared to follow, instead of leading, Lord Falkland in his eloquent denunciation of Church tyranny. Amongst others, he instanced the case of an able, upright, and eloquent minister, who had been deprived,

of his benefice, without a hearing, and then, in a manner, outlawed by Archbishop Laud. He spoke at such length of this persecuted divine, that I became deeply interested in his cause; I made many inquiries concerning him afterwards. It ended in my writing to my father, who never refused me a request. Lord Falkland, also, at Mr. Hutchinson's request, applied for him; and it was nominally to oblige the latter, that the Puritan, whom you have seen and have reason to remember, was received into this house."

During this long explanation, I had once or twice attempted to interrupt the eloquent and unconscious casuist. I was prevented, partly from observing her evident anxiety to complete her task, and partly through my bewilderment at hearing such grave, and to me, distasteful and dry subjects, so discoursed of by a young and tender maiden. I could have listened, too, to that dear voice with gladness and gratitude, whatever was the subject, as long as its music vouchsafed to flow. I almost forgot the strange matter of her words in the pleasure of listening to them; and all that I remembered was some

curiously framed imaginative story, that with pleasant originality selected Puritans and politics as its theme. It was told with such artless truth, with such a diffident yet candid confession of what she called "heretical and rebellious" fancies, that I felt my regret at these strange and deep convictions more than repaid by the gratified pride of being so trusted by her.

There was something, however, in the latter part of her confessions that rather jarred upon my ear, especially as her clear tones appeared to falter as she spoke of the Puritan whom she had so unaccountably taken under her protection. It was not jealousy that I then felt flushing through my cheek, but a sense of indignation towards what I considered the designing arts of a fanatic. I could not but suppose that he had taken advantage of her girlish enthusiasm in order to awaken as lively an interest in his own behalf, and to exercise it in a manner not altogether in accordance with my romantic ideas concerning her refined and delicately sensitive character.

Zillah observed the embarrassment of my silence, and could note even the sense of my

obligations to this man, which prevented me from speaking of him in the round terms that were ready to escape my lips ; then, as if to relieve me, she continued, in a somewhat saddened, but firm and almost proud tone :

“ You seem, Reginald, to wonder at my peculiar taste, perhaps at my rashness, in involving myself in such studies and such scenes. I almost share your surprise when I look back upon the last twelvemonths ; but my conduct, believe me, was not inspired by girlish caprice or obstinacy. I seemed to myself to be led by some high power along a path, which was so uninviting, and which the more painful it became, the more I felt called upon to tread—like the devotees I have read of in Popish pilgrimages.”

“ And this Puritan,” said I, “ this martyr, did you, as a penance, admit him to your confidence, and strengthen your convictions with his impartial opinions ?”

Zillah looked at me with surprise, and then gravely added : “ I was too much disappointed in the expectation I had formed of my intended tutor to profit by his opinions in any way. I

saw him for the first time here, on my return from London, and I could scarcely believe that such a young and comely person was the reverend and out-worn looking man to whose age and infirmities I flattered myself I had been instrumental in affording refuge from his enemies."

"A thousand thanks, dear Zillah, for your candour; while rapt in the pleasure of hearing you, I have forgotten all the questions that your words suggested. Answer me but this one: why did you so estrange yourself from me, and why—if I dare to ask without danger of renewing it—have you now broken through that estrangement?"

"Yes, I will tell you. I was at first reserved towards you, because I then hoped to prevent you from advancing towards what you have this day done. I have now become frank and confidential with you, partly because I was moved by the thought of all the sorrow you have undergone, and then in the hope that you will retreat into that dear and valued relationship of a brother, which you once allowed me to think I possessed, and which"—she paused a little, as

if in search of the fit expression, and then added, hesitatingly—"is the nearest tie that ever can unite us."

Though not a little astounded at such a termination to this long-sought interview as these words conveyed, I was little disposed to yield to them their due authority. I was almost inclined to smile, and to rally the young speaker on her sybilline appearance, and the prophetic style in which she spoke. There was something, however, in her look that deeply moved, if it did not awe me. Tears stood trembling in her soft bright eyes; her form was dilated, and her small hand grasped convulsively the mantel-piece near which she stood. Whether truly or falsely, she believed that she was then pronouncing the sentence of her life.

As I was about to speak, Lady Demiroy approached; the jingling of clustering keys, scissars, corkscrews, and a variety of other implements that hung from her capacious girdle, resounded through the gallery, and gave me only time to whisper eagerly that I was content to be brother—ay! Puritan, rebel, or Anabaptist itself, if I might retain her confidence until

—I could be something more. Then the wide door swung widely open, and her ladyship appeared, dispensing a volume of compliments and inquiries, that were only interrupted by discovering that I looked pale, and required a certain infallible cordial, the virtues of which turned the tide of her ideas. Perhaps her womanly or matronly instinct, too, divined something of my late conversation, for she turned anxiously to Zillah with inquiring looks. They met no answer there, however; her daughter had leant forward towards the window, as if something there had arrested her attention, and Lady Demiroy exclaimed:

“I had almost forgotten to tell thee, my dear young friend, that a messenger from your father seeks you, and seems in haste. They say there is strange news abroad, and I have just received a post with many letters which it may contain tidings you will wish to learn.”

But I was already moving towards the door, and making my parting salutation.

“Farewell, Zillah,” I whispered, “for the present;—to-morrow—”

“To-morrow, you will be far away, I doubt

not," she replied ; " you will follow what seems to you the path of duty ; and may heaven guide you in the right way !"

So saying she left the room by an opposite door, and the next moment I was in the saddle and galloping towards home.

CHAPTER VI.

He is wit's pedlar, and retails his wares
 In courts and camps, in towns and country fares.

ABSALOM.

He's reason's renegade; one with whom
 The word *consider* is too troublesome;
 Who doth obey his passion and affection,
 Whose cogitation is the child of action.

JORDAN.

I HAD scarcely cleared the first enclosure, when I observed Phœbe riding in the same direction, with her favourite old chaplain jogging by her side.

“I have been wishing to meet with you,” said I, “and even hoped that you would wander on with me so far as home, in the hope that poor Hugo might get a sight of you: he has only too much need of your bright presence to cheer him.”

Phœbe turned her horse's head at once towards our house, and spoke tearfully of all

the changes that had taken place there. But sadness was not natural to her young buoyant spirit, and she soon began to interrogate me as to my visit at the Castle, "where, doubtless," she said, "you have seen my most unsisterly sister."

"*I* cannot apply to her that epithet," I answered, rather wincing at the recollection of her fraternal injunctions, "nor, I should think can you, with justice."

"She is no use to me as a sister, I mean to say," maintained Phœbe, "she is so changed, and solitary, and thoughtful. I do believe she has turned Puritan, though even that odious Hezekiah had little of her conversation, notwithstanding she brought him upon us for our sins."

"But he soon relieved you of his presence?" said I, inquiringly.

"Ah! yes; and thereby hangs a tale.—You need not look curious; I hate mystery, and I will tell you all about it. In the first place, you must know he was once a soldier, and served bodily, or carnally as he would say, in the wars at Rochelle. He then had some other name, which doubtless was a good one, or he

would not have changed it for his present denomination. He was taken prisoner by the French, from whom he escaped to Geneva, where he became edified into his present condition. Some time since a post came from the rebel leaders, who, it seems, are collecting their forces, and an hour after, our gloomy friend had vanished."

Here she ceased ; we had entered our grounds and met Hugo, who said that he had come to seek me, as a stranger had been to visit my father, and inquiries were instantly made for me.

This intelligence changed the current of my thoughts. I scarcely regretted that I was obliged to forego the rest of Phoebe's story : she and Hugo remained together, and in a few minutes I found myself alone with my father.

He was alone, and seemed unusually agitated. "Reginald, my son," said he ; "the long-expected crisis has arrived, and we must part, I fear, at once. You have heard of my visitor."

"I have heard," I answered, "that a French pedlar insisted on seeing you, and that when he was denied on account of your illness, he

wrote some lines in a strange tongue, which at once procured him admittance to your presence."

"He is a pedlar," said my father, "who deals in dangerous wares. In a word, he comes with despatches from the Queen, and Her Majesty's communications, with reverence be it spoken, are seldom of good omen to our country. My visitor brings solemn tidings too, which you shall hear from our own mouth, as far as he chooses to reveal them. I shall only give you one caution: imitate our friend, Sir Janus, for once, and avoid committing yourself prematurely to our guest. I am bound by my promise to keep his secret, and by my honour as a servant of the King, to obey his directions; but I would rather his Majesty had chosen any other messenger, both for his own royal sake and mine."

So saying, Lord Hastings walked to the door, and admitted a most singular looking personage, who entered with a jaunty air, flung an inquiring glance round the apartment, and saluted me with exaggerated courtesy. He carried a light pack upon his shoulders, which

he flung off with practised ease, and placed carefully upon the table. His disguise, if such it was, was admirably sustained; not only his dress, gaudy, soiled, and wayworn, and his hair and beardless chin were those of a French pedlar, but the very expression of his countenance seemed suited to his calling: the tones of his voice, the anxious twinkling of his eye, the shrug of his shoulder, the nervous activity of his fingers as he proceeded to undo his pack, would have precluded the idea that he had been ever otherwise engaged than now.

“Milort,” said he, “I hafe here, besides what I hafe show you, one ting dat will just shute my noble young master here; if he be de son of my noble lort, and of one soldier heart as his apparence do promess.”

“We are here,” said my father, who was in no mood for mumming; “as safe as closed doors and honest company can make us; this is my eldest son; I have little doubt that he will be at the disposal of his King, as all his fathers have been before him; but he must choose for himself when he learns as much of your errand as you are disposed to trust him with.”

“ Well, then,” exclaimed the stranger, drawing up his fine figure into an attitude that contrasted strangely with the mean dress he wore, and throwing into his voice and look an irresistible frankness and fascination ; “ I have no disguise with a son of the House of Hastings : into your hands, young Sir, I am about (I trust) to commit the safe-keeping of the King’s secrets, of my honour and my life. But before I ask you to accept such a charge, I must tell you all the danger that you run in doing so. I am George Digby, the abhorred of the Parliament, the outlaw of the Close Committee, the Achitophel of the pamphleteers ; in addition to which I fulfil at present the character of a spy, just escaped in a most comfortless fishing boat from your good town of Hull, and its most worthy governor, Sir John Hotham.”

It was, indeed, Lord Digby ; the most accomplished courtier, the most eloquent orator, the most daring soldier, and the most eccentric and original person of his time, whom I then beheld. I was then at the age, and in the mood that thirsts most for action, and my

heart bounded at the prospect of adventure that now seemed to open before me."

"I know not what may be required of me, my Lord," I exclaimed; "but there is my hand in pledge that, with my father's good leave, I will stand by you to the death in all that may concern the welfare of my country, and the honour of the King. I am but too little acquainted with the state of public affairs; but sure I am that the path pointed out by my father must be that of duty, and one which it becomes a gentleman to follow."

"There spoke a true son of Hastings," said Lord Digby, cordially grasping my offered hand, and then turning to my father, he added, "This youth recalls old times, my Lord, when you were as prompt and fearless in your service; yet it was spiced with somewhat of a reservation that marred your high fortunes at the Court, and deprived us finally of one of our worthiest supporters in our hour of need. Well! well!" he continued in a more cheerful tone; "your Lordship was perhaps quite right, but now we have a cause that leaves no room for hesitation. Since Falkland and Ned

Hyde have joined us, we may well calculate on those who have warmer blood within their veins."

"The time is indeed gone by," said my father, sadly, "when men of honour can remain neutral. As long as mere opinions were at issue, I esteemed myself happy in my peaceful retirement, apart from all the strife of party, and endeavouring to preserve my children from the passionate prejudices that so distracted England. Now that the sword is drawn, and the honour of the crown, and the existence of our liberties is threatened, shame befall the man who seeks for shelter in obscurity — may it cover him and his name for ever. Ay, my Lord," he continued, as the colour mounted to his pale cheeks, and he walked the ground with a firmer tread, "I will confess your visit was at first but little welcome to me: it not only recalled former scenes that I had long striven to forget and to forgive, but it brought a summons that I knew would be irresistible to my son, my companion, the stay of my house, the comfort of my declining years and failing health. But all the reservation with which you chal-

lenged me just now, is gone. That son is even now at your disposal, to be your guard and guide. My contingent of men and money for the King shall soon follow with his brother ; unless, indeed, I myself may be allowed and able to wait on my sovereign in person. I seem to have grown stronger since I have been thus roused from my sad lethargy, and it may yet please Heaven to permit me to accompany the royal standard to the field. But now time presses : you, my Lord, will need some refreshment after your long and perilous adventure ; you will find it in the adjoining chamber, and while you are so employed, I will tell my son in a few words what it is most necessary for him to know. Then he shall be ready to attend you.”

So saying, he led Lord Digby into the ante-chamber, where the wondering but silent butler had prepared a meal but little in accordance with our visitor's assumed character. Excited as I was, by the novelty and nature of the events that came crowding so rapidly on my mind, I could not help pausing for a moment to watch the disguised Cavalier, who had relapsed

suddenly into the garrulous Frenchman, his whole soul apparently occupied on the savoury prospect spread before him. The old butler, with wondering eyes and busy hands could scarcely seek for and supply the innumerable wants of the dusty pedlar, who seemed to take delight in yet farther bewildering him.

“Mille remerciemens, my very goot Lort,” exclaimed the impostor, as he devoured with his eyes the various viands on the table; “nevare since I did have de honore to wait upon de Cardinal Richlieu wid de blessed relick—de pocket-handkerchee of de eleven thousand vargin of Cologne, (and someting else)—nevare did I be so honored vid grand hospitalité; I am quite ashamed. Now master butler, vill you be so goot as to cut that jambon, dat ham, more tin, and vill you have goodness to pool off dat ving of capon, not to coot it vid de dam knife. Now, pleeze, von verre of de Canary, or rader of dat oder bottel vid de spider veb upon him. Tanks, mine vary goot friend,” he continued, to the indignant butler; “and now von slice of dat pasty, coot it deep, vere de juices do lie perdu.”

Leaving, as I thought, a rapidly ripening quarrel between the eccentric nobleman and his displeased attendant, I followed my father once more into his own room. He left the intervening door wide open, in order that Lord Digby might, if he choose, hear all he said ; but the etiquette of the courtier appeared to vie with his own, and he continued his gastronomic volubility uninterruptedly, so as to drown all sounds except his own.

“Reginald,” said my father, “you must leave me almost immediately on an expedition involving considerable peril to yourself and others, and one that will require much skill and caution to accomplish happily. You are as yet little practised in worldly affairs, but your own religious faith, your sense of honour, and the memory of what you owe to your ancient name, will preserve you and guide you in all difficulties. What I most fear for you is your rashness and love of danger ; these, if hitherto venial, become most grave faults when you have the lives of others, and perhaps yet higher responsibilities in your keeping. The strife which I have long fearfully an-

ticipated is broken out ; the King is to raise his standard within a week. The Roundheads are already mustered in strong force, with the design of capturing his sacred person. Lord Digby is lately arrived from Holland ; he announces coming supplies of money and arms from the Queen, but at present there is an almost utter want of both in the royal camp. You will start within the hour to escort our visitor in safety over the Wolds, where already the disaffected are on the watch for him. As soon as our troops can be mustered, they shall follow you to Nottingham : poor fellows, they are ever ready to follow our pennon, notwithstanding their usage in the Scotch campaigns, when that dastardly traitor, Holland, so dishonoured himself and them. You will tell his Majesty, that with the permission of Providence, he shall have some sixty harquebusiers, well mounted and equipped, with armour for as many more, at his service, within four-and-twenty hours. Tell him also, that such money as I shall be able to raise, and the best part of my plate shall soon be forwarded by a safe hand, to his Court, at Nottingham.

Tell him, likewise, that I have sent my sons, all that remains dear to me on earth, to conquer or to die beneath that banner which was never unfurled since the Conquest without a Hastings to support it. Now go, and prepare for your journey. My old groom, Dick Blount, will attend you; he is cautious and silent, and as true as steel. I suppose you will want to take your wild Irish page, but I doubt he had better follow with the rest; he is scarcely fit for such secret service as the present?—Well! if you can depend upon him, let him go. The black pony for the Pedlar will make four horses in all, more than enough, considering the paths you will have to take. If you should meet with any interruption, you must endeavour to evade it if possible. Avoid violence to the very last; but remember, whatever happens, that our guest must go free; not so much for his own sake as for that which he carries. He should wait for the stronger escort but I fear it might attract attention, and by the time it was ready, the country would be up; besides, time presses. Now, farewell, my son; troublous days are approaching, and it may be

long before we meet again. Be firm and unfaltering in your loyalty to the King, and, above all, to the King of Kings. Let no vain controversies entangle your reason and obscure your clear and single-minded sense of duty. Whatever may be that of others, yours is simple; keep it so. Take with you, as my last precept, the homely motto of our family: 'STICK TO THE CROWN, IF YOU FIND IT HANGING ON A BUSH.' And so—"

CHAPTER VII.

— Seek the King,

That sun I pray may never set ! I have told him
What, and how true thou art ; he will advance thee ;
Some little memory of me will stir him,
(I know his noble nature,) not to let
Thy noble service perish too.—SHAKESPERE.

THE sun was setting as we rode away from my venerable home. Our pathway led upward, towards the hills ; and at each receding step I could more distinctly trace the whole scenery within which my childhood had been past. The sun's last light was playing on the various towers and gables of the old house, and flushing all its western windows with a fiery red, but all the lawns, and woods, and the distant sea, were already silvering in the moon's pale rays. A white vapoury mist rose gradually from the low grounds, and gently veiled from my earnest

gaze the prospect that I shall see perhaps no more. Notwithstanding the proud thoughts and hopes that swelled my heart, and the delighted sense of novelty and adventure that thrilled through my brain when I leaped upon my horse, and heard the clank of steel ring merrily round me—notwithstanding all this, a deep and sad sensation of despondency came over me, as we moved away in silence over the grassy sward. By a strange revulsion, too, when we passed by the old chapel, I almost envied the repose of that calm burial-ground, where my mother and her child lay sleeping.

But just then a trumpet rang out cheerily from the adjacent village, and told that the gallant yeomen had already obeyed the summons of their Lord, and were mustering. At the same time, as if wakened from his own reveries by the same sound, my companion broke forth into his usual rhodomontade of foreign jargon, and completely put to flight my graver thoughts.

“By de beard of St. Denis,” said he, “my young master, you and your goot peoples be von vera silent compaignie, and I sall fear to find

my own tong steef vidin my mout when I sall vant it, if it be ever wanted in dis silent coantrie. By your goot leaf, I have someting for your privat ear, if it be pleasing to you hear me speak it."

I motioned to my attendants to rein back their horses, and Lord Digby resumed :

" As soon as we are out of your own neighbourhood, I shall take leave to dismount from this good nag, and to proceed on foot, as more beseeeming my supposed condition : and since I shall then have to maintain due distance towards you, I would fain make use of the short space that remains to me of improving our acquaintance. To tell you the truth, too, that old Rhenish wine of your good father's, which Mr. Choppin dealt out to me in large though grudging measure, has made me feel very sociably disposed. I confess, also, to having some spice of early romance still lingering about me, and this is a time, and scenery, and circumstance, that might well excuse a little sentiment. Sidney's 'Arcadia' would require nothing more romantic than our present situation.—And lo ! as if some spirit conjured up by

the imagination—behold a comely damsel and a reverend man. Comely ! she's beautiful, by all the fairies ! Una and her Archimage were never better met."

The Una proved to be Phœbe, the Archimage, her old chaplain. It seemed that she had accompanied Hugo almost to our house, and in trying to find a short way home, had missed her way among the woods. Her venerable guardian having trusted himself entirely to her guidance, was equally bewildered, and far more uneasy, on finding himself thus belated with his charge.

" But now," she exclaimed, after this explanation, " pray tell me how *you* happen to be here, for the whole world seems in a state of confusion, as if the Roundheads had taken the place of Providence, which doubtless they would gladly feel called upon to do. Here are trumpets sounding, men galloping to and fro ; strange vessels arriving in our quiet bay, and strange people landing from them : and finally, you and I are met here at a most untimely hour ; you clad in armour, and I seeking my way like a heroine of romance !"

“ My vera lofely and resplendent young lady,” said the Pedlar, anticipating my reply, “ I am, in my poor person, the cause of this noble young gentleman’s present appearance here, and in this varlike guise. I am de strange man, landed from de strange ship ; and stranger still, I haf see you in de house of von great Cavalier Comtesse, vid,” and here he sunk his voice, “ vid one great Roundhead on his knee, making very moche prayer.”

Phoebe started, and stared with astonishment at the Pedlar, who went on nodding his head, as if to say he knew more than he chose to say. Then drawing near to me, she whispered :

“ In Heaven’s name, whom have you here, Reginald?—or are we indeed all bewitched? Zillah, you tell me, was prophecying to you this morning, what already has come true ; and this outlandish coxcomb has reminded me of a secret that might have defied the Witch of Endor.”

“ I am pledged to secresy,” I replied, laughing ; “ but your best way now lies through the

forest, out upon the common, whence you can canter home as fast as your reverend companion finds convenient ; meanwhile, we shall have the advantage of your company, and your sooth-saying Pedlar may perhaps make further revelations to you, even if your quick eyes do not anticipate him."

Phœbe was charmed with the prospect of adventure and mystery. She was well aware of the state of indignation, if not alarm, in which she should find Lady Demiroy, but she trusted to her own wit and favour to make light of it, and so she rode on merrily. The Pedlar, with an assurance that would have highly provoked, if it had not amused her, drew up close to her side ; in a few minutes he so entirely engrossed her attention, that I found myself glad to fall back upon the old Chaplain, from whom I was in hopes of hearing something of what was nearest to my thoughts. Who has not experienced the interest that we take in every thing we see or hear that may possibly transmit a word, or look, or thought

from or to her who rules over the world of our imagination?

The Chaplain was a very aged man, who thought little of all modern and worldly things, except his lovely pupil; but his memory was richly stored with old legends and memorials of that past, to which he seemed entirely to belong. The subordinate station which, unfortunately and unwisely, our household clergy occupy,* had rendered this venerable man very meek and retiring; but when the ministration of his own high office was required, no archbishop in the land could exercise it with greater dignity. I know not what was the secret sympathy that existed between him and the capricious beauty whom he loved with all the fondness of a nurse towards a favourite child, but he and Phœbe were almost inseparable companions.

The good old man now jogged contentedly

* In the time of which our Cavalier writes, the chaplain, in great families, occupied an almost menial position, as every one now knows.

along upon a sedate pony, that was white with age, but nevertheless had zeal enough still left to chafe because it was no longer by Phœbe's coquettish little palfrey's side. The rider was somewhat bent, but he kept his saddle like one long used to it ; his white hair floated on his shoulders, between his broad brimmed hat and the cloak peculiar to his calling ; his countenance wore an expression of resignation peculiar to itself, and had often interested me. I now ventured to ask him whether it was fatigue or the news of the morning that made him look so grave.

“ Nay, noble sir,” he answered, “ my old limbs have become almost as unconscious of fatigue, as my mind of fear. I know indeed that the people do furiously rage together against our anointed king, but I do also know that they imagine a vain thing.”

“ May it be so !” I exclaimed ; “ but tell me, reverend Sir, how long is it since you have lost your coadjutor at the Castle ?”

“ Nay, noble Sir, he was no coadjutor of mine ; I had neither part nor lot in him. He

belonged not to our fold, though I trust the Shepherd will yet call him in his own good time. He had some summons, I believe from the disaffected, who require his ministry more than my good patron did, and he hasted away in the night season. I know nought of him since then, and almost as little did I know before. He is gone, however, and I pray that he may have grace to guide him. For me, I would also fain be called to gird up my loins for travel, for they say that the King is about to raise his standard, and I would that I could see and bless it before I die.—But my young lady waits, and I fear our roads part here.”

Phoebe had reined back her palfrey in order to turn homeward ; and when I rode up to her, I observed the traces of some emotion on her usually joyous countenance. She wished me very cordially farewell, and with a distant salutation to my companion, she turned away at a rapid pace towards her home.

Lord Digby and I rode on over the common in the open moonlight ; he looked for a few

minutes after the light form of his companion, as it faded away into the forest, and exclaimed with a sort of sigh :

“ Pity it is, that the world—such as we have made it—should darken over a bright soul like that. I was jesting with her just now and amusing myself with her surprise, and yet she has wakened in my own heart more thoughtfulness than my present critical position could inspire. But we are coming, I presume, too near our border village to waste time on sentiment ; I will therefore briefly satisfy your very natural curiosity as to how I became acquainted with yon fair damsel.

“ You know she has been on a visit to our reigning wit and beauty, Lady Carlisle. There I saw her, but she saw me not—at least she saw no Pedlar. My Lady Countess was delighted to have possession of such an attraction for the men as her beautiful young kinswoman ; and Mistress Phœbe, though a mere child in years, soon found out her value, and the influence over her patroness that she might pretend to. I con-

fess to you, that when I first found that girl in such an atmosphere, I thought she must be aware of her danger, and on the watch to make the most of it. But I soon discovered my mistake; I saw she was perfectly ignorant of her hostess's true character, and that her own purity had kept her unconscious of the viciousness that surrounded her. I was touched, I scarcely know why, by her situation; and I resolved to rescue her, in an impulse of romantic feeling, for which few of our fine ladies would credit me. I watched her closely, and soon found my opportunity.

“You are perhaps aware that my Lady Carlisle aspires to hold the balance between the contending parties in the present conjuncture: the Queen's confidence on the one hand, and Pym's intimacy on the other, enables her alternately to deceive both; and if she were as much mistress of her love as of her loyalty, she might doubtless become as formidable as she is mischievous. But her passion for that rogue Pym is sincere, though so unaccountable that she

escapes its imputation. Now, it so happens, that her Roundhead is as little loyal in his love as in more important matters, and no sooner had our fair rustic here appeared upon the stage than he was captivated by her. He has not much time, you may suppose, for trifles, and he takes his wine freely, like most orators. Well! the very first evening he met her, I saw him paying eager and unguarded court to his new divinity; I had only to direct Lady Carlisle's attention for a moment to the tableau that her young kinswoman and the grey-haired demagogue presented, in an adjoining chamber, as the latter knelt to offer her a rose! The following day Mistress Phoebe was manœuvred into a terror of the London mobs, that were then a little obstreperous; and she and her sister, who was staying at the house of some rascally Roundhead in the city, were straightway exported to her country. O! I promise you, it was a rare piece of management on my part."

"Truly," said I, "it was generously and nobly done, and I would fain ask you for

further particulars concerning the transaction ; but here we are at the last hamlet that calls my father master, and for the future I can only secure your safety as far as your own wit or my strength can answer for it.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Now for your lives—nay more—for honour's sake
Fight, and repel this first rebellious crew.

OLD PLAY.

“WELL!” said Lord Digby, looking wistfully at the pony that had carried him so far, “I suppose I must submit; but with your leave your page here (who looks a great deal too sharp, by the bye) shall fetch me a beaker of ale to wash my throat, after all its Gallic exercise.” So saying, he descended with great apparent caution from his little steed, which was left behind at the hostel whence the disguised courtier was refreshed.

On resuming our march, Lord Digby proposed to walk on so far in advance of us,

that we might occasionally catch glimpses of him by the moonlight. The trainbands of the county were up and armed, and patrolling the leading roads for the Parliament. If they stopped our Pedlar, he was to evade them civilly, if possible ; if not, we were to fight for it, and he was determined not to be taken alive, under any circumstances. We had about forty miles to travel, however, and as it was of great importance to push on as fast as possible during the night, I dismounted my page, and requested Lord Digby to take his place.

“Are you then going to leave the boy behind?” he demanded.

“No,” I said, “I am about to send him in advance, to reconnoitre, and I promise you that no mortal man shall approach without your having sufficient warning to dismount, and assume your disguise.”

“So be it,” said the courtier, as he mounted with careless composure : “these good fellows already know me for a countryman of their own who is in trouble, and I do not now seek to hide from them that my life is in their

hands. Whether that life be of any value, they shall judge by their reward if we reach Nottingham in safety."

Old Blount smiled grimly and somewhat scornfully, as he muttered; "Man and boy, I've been trusted by my good Lord this five and thirty years, and it is'nt for the like of you, that I'd now fail his orders, whilst I've life to discharge 'em."

"Well said, my trusty yeoman," rejoined the disguised Pedlar, with a more patronizing air than was quite relished by the still puzzled man-at-arms. "And you, my lad," continued Digby, "may I trust you, too?"

"Faith, my Lord, if you do, it's more than yon publican would for a pint of ale," carelessly replied the boy, who was busy unlacing his hose, and transferring his shoes from his feet to his girdle.

"How now, sirrah!" cried I, having only overheard the last few words of this dialogue, "do you know who your're talking to?"

"By the bib of St. Bridget I do, Sir, and no wonder, when I heard him tell Mistress Phoebe all about it with his own two

lips in the wood below there. I can shut my eyes at your bidding, Sir, as in duty bound ; but my ears being open by nature, discourse leaks into them, whether I will or no."

I was about to be very angry with, if not actually to chastise the reckless descendant of the Irish kings, when Digby stopped me : "I would give you half I'm worth for that imp," said he : "the rascal must have been fifty yards from me when he overheard the whispers that I breathed into the ears of yonder little beauty. However, I have no fear of his blabbing, except to ourselves ; for I heard him baffle the village *coterie* that gathered round him at the ale-house with an air of innocent simplicity that I could scarcely have assumed myself."

"Hark ye, Bryan !" said I to the boy in question, who was lingering near us in some anxiety ; "this once I pardon you for letting that tongue of yours wag so freely : but, by mine honour, if it betrays your eavesdropping again, I'll silence it for ever, or send you back to the land of your royal ancestors. Now scout out a-head, and if you see anything bigger

than a sheep on all the moor, come back like lightning."

The boy tossed his cap up into the air, with a suppressed shout of "Hi! for Hastings!" and bounding forward, was in a moment lost in the mist and out of sight. Meanwhile, we rode on at a steady trot, Blount, with his carbine unslung, bringing up the rear.

"Now tell me about that wild boy," said my companion as we swept along; "the sturdy groom I think I understand."

"The latter," I replied, "was a trooper in a regiment my father raised long ago for the Palatines. He was one of the few who returned home alive, though he often exposed his life to save his master's in that deadly campaign. He again accompanied him to the relief of Rochelle, the last occasion on which my father appeared in arms for the King."

"You do not know perhaps," said Digby, drily, "why it *was* the last time; for, sooth to say, it is a story that a loyal man would scarcely take as his text in preaching for his king."

I replied, that I had never heard my father assign any reason for his deep seclusion, except his own taste, and the power that it gave him of being useful to his tenantry.

“So much the more reason that *I* should tell you,” said Digby; “of what you ought to know.—Your father was one of the few men of rank who could be induced, by love for the King, to follow his proud and incapable favourite on that luckless and disgraceful expedition to Rochelle. Buckingham had ordered a retreat as unadvisedly as he attacked it. Lord Hastings remonstrated; the Duke, half-maddened by difficulties that mastered him, replied with insult. Your father, on the return of the fleet to England, challenged him; and *I* bore an order from the King to Lord Hastings never again to appear at Court. Believe me, I only undertook that thankless office because I wished Lord Hastings well, and desired to soften the blow as much as possible. My motives were misinterpreted, however, and your father addressed me in such terms as I should have resented under other

circumstances. From that time he was never heard of until the expedition against Scotland required every true servant of the King's to serve his injured Sovereign. Then the ever-loyal Hastings furnished almost the first contingent ; but the King's command was still in force, and therefore it was commanded by your cousin Harry, who was near being banished for challenging Lord Holland when he fled from Dunsielaw and involved the Hastings yeomen in his disgrace. Well I remember Harry Hastings, (or Hotspur as we used to call him,) mounted on his black charger, Satan, and clearing all before him through the streets of Durham. This story, your father, who is an injured man, was too proud or too judicious to tell you ; whilst I, who am what is called a favoured courtier, do not hesitate to do so. In fact, if 'the King can do no wrong,' it must be by a deuced arbitrary stretch of courtesy that your father could be persuaded to that effect. Now, '*magna componere parvis*,' let me hear the history of yonder invisible imp of Ireland, who, I am bound to believe, is doing me good service as a scout."

I thanked Lord Digby warmly for his frank and manly tribute to my father's character, and, indeed, I was by this time quite under the spell by which this courtier won every hearer whom he did not happen in the first instance to affront.

“As for the boy,” I added, “I saved him from a wreck on our luckless coast; all the rest of the crew perished, and I found he was utterly alone in the world; so I had him taken care of, and he attached himself inseparably to me. At first he was considered in the light of my servant, but he became furious at the very name. He was descended, he said, from an Irish king, and scorned to serve under a lesser personage — except for love. He was uncontrollably wilful on this point, and at length he had his way: he was promoted to be my page, and since then his gratitude has known no bounds. I can now engage him to be all ear and eye, and as anxious for an opportunity of proving his rare qualities as we are to avoid any such necessity. He has still many of the virtues

of a savage—fidelity, and wonderful quickness of sense, and such endurance, that (when he gets his shoes off) he will beat any horse in my father's stable. In short, but for this crotchet about his blood-royal, he would be the best page in Christendom."

"They're all the same for that matter," said Digby. "Those Irish kings must indeed have been the fathers of their people, for I never yet met a native of that unhappy island who did not claim to be descended from royal loins."

As we thus conversed, we entered on the Wolds, a long chain of bleak and lonely hills, without anything to vary their monotony but a few old trees. A fine full harvest moon was shining over this wild country; white vapours from the marshes filled each valley, and left the hill-tops like so many islands floating in a sea of mist. There was to me something very fascinating in the scenery and silence all around us; something that suited well with the mingling shades of mourning retrospect and exulting hope

that filled my thoughts. Night-travelling was, as yet, a novelty to me; and though since then I have become familiar with the stars, as they shone down on many a weary march and tented field, yet they have never lost their deep interest, or ceased to influence my fancy. There is especially one radiant star — Aldeboran they call it — that always seems to shine especially for me. Like the eyes of some fine picture, it seems ever to meet my gaze with a gentle, kindly, liquid light—high and serene above the storms of earth and sky, and only sought for in moments of elevated thought and inspiration.

I used often to compare Zillah to this star. Now that it shone down so brightly and lovingly over my silent but dangerous path, I was fain to think of the old heathen legend in which the long and lonely watching Ariadne was transmitted to the sky.

While thus absorbed in boyish fancies, time passed on, and I had almost forgotten the momentous purpose of our silent ride, when suddenly a long, low whistle thrilled in

my ear and made my flesh creep. I looked round, but I saw nothing save my companion, who was nodding in happy sleep upon his horse, and the gaunt form of the man-at-arms looming large in the twilight behind me. In another moment, I started to find a hand upon my knee; but before I could grasp my pistol, the whispering voice of my page called to me to halt, and my horse stood still. Digby's horse stopped at the same moment, and its rider awoke, his eye flashing clear and bright, and a pistol ready in his firm hand.

“Off with ye!” whispered the boy, “and see you play your part in earnest, for there's little joking yonder. There's six stout men in buff and bandolier, there; right across the only narrow pass in all the hills—bad luck to it for sticking itself in that spot, of all spots in the world!”

Without a moment's hesitation, Digby dismounting, walked swiftly forward to meet the danger, and soon afterwards we followed. At length my anxious ears caught the expected challenge of the sentries, and we were near

enough to hear the pedlar's French jargon in high argument with three or four others who spoke loud and angrily. I halted in the valley, where the mist still concealed us from view, and the soft, moist turf prevented our horses' tread from being heard. Above us, on the hill side, we could distinctly see the groups of disputants, and the figures assumed a gigantic size, relieved against the clear sky above them.

"Let us give them one volley, Sir," whispered Blount," drawing near me, "and if they don't disperse with fright, at any rate we shall be a fair match for the rest."

The advice seemed plausible to a man accustomed to bloodshed, but I shrank from the thought of taking life as long as there remained a hope of discharging our duty otherwise. I therefore ordered my men to advance a little, and halted them, so as to be just partly visible to our opponents as if they were the foremost files of a column of cavalry; there to remain still as death until I ordered them to advance. I then cantered forward, and only reined in my horse when I

came close to the levelled muskets of the Roundhead party.

“Hollo! there,” I cried; “ground your arms, and declare yourselves. Who are ye, and what do ye here at this hour of the night?”

The men instinctively obeyed, and lowered their matchlocks; they were but raw trainbands, and as yet uneasy, not only as to the authority by which they were under arms, but at the prospect of coming to close quarters with mounted troopers. There were only four of them; the leader of the party and another soldier being still busy with the Pedlar. I could see that this other comrade was being despatched, I presumed for assistance, near at hand. The leader at once came forward at my summons, dragging the Pedlar with him by the cloak. I turned, as if to my troop, and called out: “Ride round the hill, and cut off all stragglers; if they resist, cut them down.”

Blount disappeared as if swallowed by the mist, and in a few moments I could hear his horse clambering up the steep hill-side upon

the right. The Roundheads, who held the only apparent pass, had not calculated on our knowledge of the country; every bosk and glen of which was as familiar to our hunting experience as those in our own park. They looked irresolutely at one another, and at length their leader replied surlily to my reiterated demand:

“Pass on, thou and thine, in peace, and molest not those who are doing the work of the Saints and the will of Parliament.”

“De vork of Saints!” screamed the Pedlar, in a voice that seemed half cracked by excitement and impotent anger; “if it be not de vork of St. Nichola, de saint of tieves, I do not know vat de mean by dere saintly vorks. De have tore de doublet ov my back, de skeen ov my neck, and vorse dan all—oh, dear! oh, dear!—de have stole my pack.”

“Silence, sirrah!” I exclaimed; “you are in a land of law and right, and shall have no harm but what shall be made good unto you. And for you, Sir,” I continued to the Roundhead, who still held his prisoner tightly, “you

shall answer this charge elsewhere. Face about your men, and lead me to your officer, who, I presume, is not far off."

The Roundhead chose to adopt the excuse that my words seemed to afford him, that I was entitled to exercise authority; the more so, as an indescribable variety of voices was heard from the misty hollow where I had left Bryan, and on the other side of the pass, such a clatter of hoofs and armour as might have required a dozen horsemen to produce.

"I will do thy bidding, young man," said the Roundhead, at length; "but I do warn thee that there be grave suspicions anent this ape, whom thou befriendest as a brother. Doubtless, however, thou hast authority, and wilt not see the good cause suffer through thy negligence."

So saying, he flung from him the indignant Pedlar, who eagerly picked up his pack, jerked it on his shoulders, and stepped out after the retreating Roundheads, with many vain-glorious gestures and gasconading threats. I waited for a few minutes, until the party had disappeared

round the angle, and then whistling to Bryan to approach, I told him to keep an eye on the Pedlar, and to be at hand with his horse, if necessary.

By this time the party had cleared the pass, beyond which lay an open country, for many miles, almost as far as the river Witham. Following close after the Roundheads and their late prisoners, I found Blount stationed at the mouth of the pass, sitting stiffly as beseemed a sentinel, with his carbine at the recover. As I passed him he drew up at my side, and whispered, "I was forced to cleave yon runagate's skull in two, for he was about to fire, and would have brought his party upon us before you had cleared the pass. Now, in our Lady's name, let the Pedlar, or whoever he be, make the best of his way, for there is at least five score of Roundheads by yon farm-house."

It was too true. A few hundred yards off, there was a large watch-fire blazing high among the trees, and ever and anon, dark figures crossed it to and fro.

“There be our picket,” exclaimed the Roundhead, in a loud voice, that was meant less for information than alarm. In a moment the Pedlar stepped lightly back, leaped into Bryan’s saddle, and was off like lightning.

“Pursue the villain!” I cried to Blount, at the same time placing myself between the fugitive and the little party who were about to fire. “Back to your post!” I shouted to their leader, “and give the alarm.”

Sir John Gell’s musqueteers were not then so ready with their weapons as they afterwards became, and for a moment they paused irresolutely, notwithstanding the voice of their sergeant, who roared out hoarsely: “Fire! fire! fire on the sons of Belial, one and all!”

As I plunged into the hollow, a scattered volley rang about my ears, and long afterwards I could hear the loud voices and ringing armour of the Roundheads borne on the breeze.

The first time a man hears the deadly whistle of an enemy’s bullet, he experiences an indescribable sensation; but with me, all the

unpleasantness of it was merged in the consciousness of triumph, as I dashed away into the open plain.

I soon found the faithful Blount, who had waited for the issue of my attempt; had it been unsuccessful, I have no doubt he would have returned to share my captivity or death. His dismal countenance had relaxed into something of a grin of pleasure; but the only observation that he made was concerning my hat, which a Roundhead bullet had shorn of its heron-plume. This privation he, as my valet, considered a good riddance, much as I loved and regretted it; the more so as the heron had been killed by Zillah's hawk.

It was some time before I overtook Lord Digby, who held steadily on at a hand gallop; at the same moment, Bryan bounded from behind a thicket, and accompanied our progress with a step as elastic as ever, though he sometimes condescended to rest himself for a few minutes, by holding the pony's tail.

“ I should apologize to you, my gallant young friend,” said Digby, “ for having deserted you

so unceremoniously, but that I give you credit for being able to act as difficult a part if you had had the same responsibility." He then paid me some compliments, which few could render so agreeable ; and Blount himself looked pleased with his share of well-bestowed praise.

Our ride thenceforth was exhilarating in the highest degree : the cool, bright night of a warm day affords delicious travelling ; our spirits were raised by our late success, and I observed to Digby, that danger afforded an almost intoxicating sense of pleasure. "Ay," he replied : "*le péril est comme le vin ; il monte la tête*, as we say in France."

It was past midnight when we approached Lincoln, which being in the hands of the insurgents, we were obliged to avoid, and make a détour by Hartisholme, where we crossed the Fesdik. On the outskirts of the village we stopped to breathe our horses, as we had still at least thirteen miles to travel before we could reach Newark, and we had scarcely drawn rein since we parted from Phœbe, by the forest of Beaumanoir. Digby flung himself carelessly

down to rest under an elm-tree, and, as soon as I had made a reconnoissance of the neighbourhood, I followed his example. Meanwhile, Bryan had unbuckled his saddle-bags, and produced therefrom a couple of wedges of deer-pie, some marchpane, and a case bottle of rare old wine, on which we supped right heartily. Blount, who had quite resumed his old soldier habits, lighted his pipe, and led the horses to and fro, as he kept watch. Bryan all this while was employing himself busily with my hat, and when he returned it to me, to my surprise, the lost plume waved over it in all its former pride.

“There’s a small taste of it missing,” said the boy, apologetically; “but I thought as the heron that wore the feather before your honour wore it, was killed by the lady’s hawk, you wouldn’t like to have it trodden under foot by the canting old rebel that shot it off you.”

“Then you were by my side, you foolish boy, when the Roundheads fired on me!”

“Where else could I be, your honour? I knew my Lord Pedlar here, could be trusted

with the care of his own self, and I could do no more for him; so I just crept back to hear what your honour was discoursing to those deceitful villains. And so—but whisht! by the powers, there's more of 'em!" So saying, Bryan placed his ear to the ground, and in a few seconds we could all distinctly hear the tramp of armed men. We sprang to our saddles and rode away hastily, followed by Blount, and soon afterwards by Bryan, who had leisurely waited to recover and put in order his saddlebags, which he now re-strapped upon the pony as it was cantering along.

Shortly afterwards, the first dawn revealed to us the fine old castle of Newark, where we soon arrived without further incident, and were heartily greeted by the loyal garrison.

I have dwelt too long on the trifling incidents of our march, but these were my first adventures, and made more impression on me than many a pitched battle has done since.

We only remained at Newark while our escort to Nottingham was preparing to mount; during which time Lord Digby exchanged his

pedlar's disguise for a more fitting suit. Byron, I remember, supplied him with a scarlet doublet, Thorold with a hat and cloak, and other officers subscribed other garments, to fit him out after a rich and military fashion, that became him well. The royal armoury supplied him with sword and gorget, the only steel he wore. The crimson scarf which had become the insignia of our Cavaliers, was not only furnished, but arranged on the goodly person of this courtier by our buxom and blushing landlady, who had known his Lordship in former times.

From Newark we rode post to Nottingham, leaving our horses to follow with the servants, and having for escort a score of Byron's troopers; the latter accompanied us until we came in sight of our destination, and then returned to their quarters.

CHAPTER IX.

Sir, he's a fellow,
To take the devil by the sinister horn,
And twirl him round like a top.

BARRY CORNWALL.

IF I have lingered too long on these recollections of my earlier youth, I may be excused by those who can value the innocent happiness of their own; to others I have no apology to plead, and little interest to offer. I now enter, however, on very different scenes, in which my own experience and sensations are to occupy only a subordinate part, until my story reaches to my present imprisonment. Were I abroad and stirring in the world, I might write very differently, and far less tamely than now I do;

that is, if I were to write at all. For action and meditation are almost incompatible, and when we are abroad and free among the brave, the beautiful, the dangerous, among those who can injure us and those who can reward, we little think of recording what we have scarcely time to perform. Hence it is that all our descriptions seem so tame—our ruminations so insipid compared with what we fed upon at life's high festival. How different is even the voice of wit or the touch of pathos when "coldly furnished forth" upon mere paper; and far, far more so the soul-thrilling thoughts that require all the assistance of passionate eye and utterance, to express themselves even to the quickened perceptions of those we love.

I have already been occupied for ten days in writing these few pages; and when, in re-perusal, I find their record so different from that memory which furnished them, I am almost tempted to abandon my unprofitable task. The yellow, weedy flower, upon my

dungeon wall ; the spider I have almost tamed, seem more interesting to me than all my written memorials of scenes and people that once stirred every sense and thought with emotion.

But through the deep silence of my solitude breaks the loud music of a trumpet, and once more wakens the train of recollections that having followed so far, I will follow to the end. The trumpet is silent now : doubtless, the troop it spoke to have guarded to these dreary walls another prisoner, and have now departed, leaving to us the unfelt society of one more fellow-sufferer.

Very differently sounded the trumpet in my ear, when first I saw this old Castle of Nottingham, with the royal banner floating proudly over it. Then my young heart beat high with hope's tumultuous emotions, and my fancy was fired with romantic visions.

* * * *

“Yonder gloomy castle,” said Lord Digby, as we crossed the bridge below the town,

“ seems to me like some huge den, in which, at length, our royal lion stands at bay, with scarcely a jackal courtier left that dares to show his teeth. Here’s to the rescue, then ; and woe to the hunters, when they feel the royal fangs ! Now, for the present, farewell, my trusty guide and guardian. I must straight to the King on weighty business, amid which yours, believe me, shall no wise be forgotten. Unless revolution has been also there at work, you will find fair lodgings and a comely hostess at the sign of the Antlers in the Grey Friars ; there I shall seek you as soon as my affairs at Court are somewhat settled.”

So saying, my indefatigable charge proceeded to the castle with a more thoughtful air than usual, and I was fain to seek mine inn.

The landlady of the Antlers deserved the courtier’s commendation, but her handsome features were clouded with vexation ; and though she welcomed me with professional amiability, she did not invite me to dismount.

“ Alack !” she cried, “ that I should be unable to receive a Cavalier of your condition,

because my best room is filled with Round-head hypocrites, who drink nothing stronger than ale, and devour my substance without profit."

I professed my willingness to accept of any accommodation whatever, rather than go farther, and probably fare worse; the town being densely crowded with Cavaliers, as well as with those whom the business, the profit, or the intrigues that always surround a Court, had attracted thither. "Besides," I added, "Lord Digby is to inquire for me here, and I would not miss him."

The sound of this influential name procured an instant summons for the ostler, and an invitation to such hospitality as the house could afford. "You will be pleased to make allowances for my master's parlour—poor man!" said the landlady, showing me into a little cell about eight feet square, which was but thinly partitioned off from the general guest-chamber beyond. The proprietor of the Antlers was a subdued and resigned looking person, as it behoved the husband of so accomplished a

spouse to be : we found him smoking his pipe, with his ear very close to the partition that divided or concealed him from his guests ; he seemed deeply interested in his occupation, but at a signal from his helpmate, he abandoned his lair without remonstrance.

“ Here,” said Dame Deerly, “ your honour will have no disturbance, except what is made by those in the next room, and that seldom continues much after midnight.”

A loud and heterogeneous din certainly prevailed there at present : men shouting, singing, swearing at tapster boys and at each other ; knives clanging against platters, swords against spurs, and flagons smiting upon the thick oak table : all these and many other sounds seemed to bid defiance to repose, though my hostess took no notice of the uproar. Indeed, she seemed quite willing to prolong our interview, when she was summoned elsewhere by a loud voice in the street that thundered for admittance : a roaring, rough, good-humoured voice it was, that afterwards I came to know full well.

“Hallo! hallo! host of the Horns—where art thou? Is it seemly usage for a noble Cavalier to be left here, sweltering in your foul streets like a popinjay in a July sun? ’Sdeath and wounds! will nobody answer; have we a Roundhead ambuscado here, under the beard of sacred majesty, that refuses to admit his officer? So then, here’s for an assault—*vade retro, Sathanas!*”

So saying, the Cavalier wheeled round a powerful and coal black steed, and backing him against the closed door, had the address to make him kick right into it, and that with such violence that the mark of the iron shoes remains there still.

“Saints defend us!” exclaimed my landlady, “here’s another; and another of the right sort, too, I warrant me.” And straightway the fearless woman opened her beleaguered door, just as the heels of Sathanas were about to do so more unceremoniously. In a moment the Cavalier had dismounted, flung his bridle to a man-at-arms, and stalked into the hostelrie as if the

whole world that he trod on was his own. Vainly did the hostess protest she had no room; the intruder replied, with a sounding salutation on the lips of the fair dame,

“No room! By Hebe, there must be a dozen, any one of which will suit me to a hair, whoever is the preoccupant.”

So saying, he seized on a jack of ale that was on its way to the parlour, and quaffed it deeply to the King's health.

Dame Deerly was in despair at the thought of losing a customer who so improved upon acquaintance. Indeed, it was difficult to resist the prepossession that, in spite of his boisterous and reckless manner, was inspired by the Cavalier: an expression of such joyous good humour and hearty frankness shone in his fearless eye, and played about his comely features.

He might have been about thirty years of age, but more than one streak of silver could be detected in the long and carefully dressed hair that curled over his broad shoulders. His

dress was of the very richest materials, though by no means of the newest; and the light armour and arms that he wore seemed alone to have been carefully attended to.

I had scarcely time to make these observations, when, wiping the ale-froth from his moustachios, the Cavalier strode unceremoniously into the chamber that I occupied. On seeing me, he suddenly changed his manner for one of high-bred but manly courtesy, and addressing me by name, said, that he was come on the part of Lord Digby to send me to his Majesty, who, it appeared, was just starting for Coventry.

“The King is already on the saddle,” continued the Cavalier, “and you had better take my horse in order to attend at your better convenience our peripatetic court.”

I gladly embraced the offer, and as I mounted, my new acquaintance fondly patted his sable steed; “he has come thirty miles this morning,” said he; “but Satan’s not easily tired, and your ride will scarcely be long, as

the royal train is small, and his Majesty loves to be brief in his audiences.”

Thanking my new friend for his services, I rode off to undergo my first interview with the Majesty of England.

CHAPTER X.

The castle gates outpoured light-armed troops,
In coats of mail and military pride ;
And 'mid the gallant show, in gallant state
Their monarch rode.

ARTEGAS.

I SOON reached the Castle, round the gates of which a number of people had collected to see the King come forth: many of these spectators were trainbands and men-at-arms; but there were also very many rustics, whose soiled and wayworn dresses proved that they had travelled far to obtain a sight of their sovereign. The gates swung open to a flourish of trumpets, and he appeared: whatever emotion connected with Lord Digby's revelation

may have then mingled with my young and ardent visions of loyalty, I can now speak of the King as becomes my father's son.

I felt towards his Majesty at that moment, something of the sentiment which John Bunyan has since told me he experienced at the sight of a bishop in his robes ; the idea of the man was entirely absorbed in that of his august function. I read in the mournful look that he cast on his saluting people, a vision pregnant with prophetic power, informed by vast and secret knowledge of what was then preparing against him and his kingdom. I saw, as I thought, the destiny of England incarnate in his sacred person.

My reverence was deep as it was sincere, and the courteous bow with which it was acknowledged became a nod of recognition, as Digby whispered my name in the royal ear. In a few minutes the cavalcade had passed, and I joined myself to those who brought up the rear.

Lord Digby continued for some time to ride by the King's side, in animated conversation,

and then, with a low and graceful obeisance, reined up his horse, while the King passed on.

“Now, Hastings,” said the courtier to me, “the King wants you; listen meekly, answer modestly, but promptly, and with resolution; he will like you the better, or at least *think* the better of you, for presence of mind. You remember the Spanish proverb: ‘Todo lo, che no tengo yo.’”

I spurred forward, and in a moment was beside the King, hat in hand, and listening eagerly for the first words that were to fall from majesty. They were not promising when they came.

“Your father, Sir, may thank his own hot temper that he is obliged to send a substitute for his personal service to our standard.” The King paused. Whenever he was in the wrong, he always endeavoured to excuse it by braving out his error; but his kind heart sometimes failed in its sterner purpose.

Notwithstanding my reverential loyalty, this reception sounded ungraciously; and I replied somewhat proudly:

“May it please your Majesty, when my father permitted to me the high privilege of serving under your royal standard, I knew not that he was himself incapacitated from doing so, by aught save his bodily infirmities.”

The King turned upon me a glance of grave inquiry, and then said, in a tone that contrasted strongly with that which he had before used: “Well, well; it is better that he should have left *me* to tell you that there *was* another reason, which has only lasted long enough to prove his noble and loyal nature, and which exists no longer. Write to your father and tell him so, and tell him likewise, that if it shall please Providence to restore to me my power, he shall find that I can remember high merit as well as brief offence. My Lord Digby has told me that I am again to see the Hastings’ troop, that might formerly have rendered us good service in Scottish land, if we had not been reluctant to shed blood, and if we had not trusted too much in traitors. For the present, your men

must form part of my nephew Rupert's regiment, and remain at Nottingham until our return."

So saying, the King held out his hand to me to kiss, and so we parted; he to ride on rapidly towards Coventry, and I to return to my quarters. My heart warmed within me for the royal cause, and I blessed my stars that youth and ignorance had precluded me from being involved in those political questions that seemed so much to embarrass some men's loyalty. For me, I was a mere soldier, and but too well pleased to remain so for the present.

While busied with these thoughts, Satan carried me rapidly back towards Nottingham, and I was soon at the door of my former apartment at the Antlers. On entering it, I saw Digby there, leaning his head against the wall and motioning to me to be silent and to approach. I did so, and, looking through a small hole—used, no doubt, by the landlord for private observation of his guests—I could see the various occupants of

the inn parlour. My attention, however, as well as Digby's was rivetted to a small table near us, where sat two persons engaged in close conversation, and inaudible to every one except ourselves, who were just behind the speakers. To my surprize, I recognized in one the visage of Sir Janus Demiroy; and though his cloak was drawn across the lower part of his face, and his hat slouched low upon his forehead, I could distinguish in the other the lurid eyes peculiar to Hezekiah Doom. The latter seemed engaged in the hopeless attempt to bring Sir Janus to a decided answer on some matter of importance, and was winding up his argument, in a low but vehement voice:

“ And thus, my worthy patron, thou hast placed thyself in a position of double danger, from which nothing but prompt and fearless decision can save thee: thou hast advanced great sums of money to the men of the Parliament, and earnest proffers and promises of service to the man Charles. The latter, indeed, loveth lukewarm water, but the former will spue thee

out and retain thy monies as thy fine. And then, be it borne in remembrance, the man whom the Cavaliers call King is ever ready to forgive and receive the righteous and the patriot into a favour which enslaves the body and destroys the soul; while the Parliament never forgiveth, nor is there power given unto them to do so."

I was induced thus far to remain a listener, in the hope that Sir Janus would, by his answer, vindicate himself from the dangerous imputations in which the Puritan had involved him; but when I heard him begin his reply with: "Well, I will go no farther in this business until I have spoken with Lord Essex—" I thought it high time to interrupt him. I therefore merely said to Digby: "This Sir Janus is well known to me: he is a kind, good man, but easily led." Abruptly leaving the little chamber, I then entered the parlour, walked up through the various guests, and offered my hand to my old friend. He started, and appeared annoyed at being discovered, but his chaplain remained quietly seated at the table, and drew

his cloak so tightly over his face, that I felt obliged not to appear to recognize him.

I had scarcely exchanged salutations with Sir Janus, when the Cavalier whom I have before mentioned as the proprietor of Satan, entered with half a score of troopers, and walking straight up to my two acquaintances, arrested them in the King's name.

Sir Janus started, and looked at me suspiciously, as if I had betrayed him. The Puritan let fall his cloak from his face, and drawing himself up to his full height, exclaimed :

“Spies and eavesdroppers as ye are—gentlemen as ye call yourselves—have ye so little regard to the character of an ambassador and to your own, as to seize on a man bearing messages of peace and good-will into an enemy's camp, though he be furnished with letters of safe-conduct?”

“Silence, ye owl!” sternly and scornfully shouted the Cavalier, “and know that if I were not bound by orders that I may not

slight, I would give thee free liberty, and put thee on thy defence in another fashion for those words. Guards, away with him to the castle!—As for this gentleman,” he continued, turning to Sir Janus, “he will please to accept of my personal escort; and grieved I am to be obliged to act as his gaoler.” So, saying, the Cavalier offered his arm to the Baronet, and marched him off.

I was anxious to see Digby, to ask for an explanation of this scene, but first I assured Sir Janus of my zealous service, and then following the Puritan, I offered him my hand, saying: “This is the first time, Sir, that I have had an opportunity of thanking you for your gallant and generous assistance in the most trying circumstance of my life; I hope I shall now be able to show my desire at least to prove grateful.”

The Puritan still held his arms muffled in his cloak, and coldly replied thus, as he passed on between his guards:

“You owe me far less than you suppose.

What I did was done from a common impulse of miscalled humanity. As to your services, I need them not."

I confess I was not sorry that my advances were thus met, but I hastened to Digby, to do what I could in favour of the prisoners. I found that he was gone to the castle, where the Royal Council was sitting. I repaired thither, and on being announced, was requested to enter the large old hall wherein they were assembled.

CHAPTER XI.

Canakin clink, drink boys, drink !
Under the sun there's no such fun,
As to sit by the fire and see the tap run,
Drink, boys, drink.

METHOUGHT the personages assembled in that gloomy hall resembled rather a gang of banditti in a cavern, than the privy council of a great kingdom in a royal castle. A rugged oaken table was placed across the upper end, or dais, and on each side of this sat half-a-dozen persons, for the most part clad in buff leather or light armour ; some three or four others stood around, occasionally taking part in the conversation. A couple of tall candles, in iron stands, was placed upon the rude council-table ; these, while they dimly assisted the

fading daylight, threw a strong glare on the faces of the debaters, or rather the disputants below.

It seemed to me, that Lord Digby had been giving an account of the arrest of Sir Janus and the Puritan, and explaining the manner in which he had become acquainted with their plans; while Lord Falkland was inveighing indignantly against such an act as unworthy alike of Digby and of the cause he professed to serve. Digby retorted angrily, and Hyde endeavoured to divert the rising quarrel by proposing that the prisoners should be introduced. Sir Jacob Astley, however, to my great satisfaction, declared against taking any further trouble about them.

“I know,” said he, “these stiff-necked Puritans of old. If you seek to obtain aught from them contrary to their own wills, you will find your efforts vain; their cunning will always baffle ours. Ay, even yours, my Lord Digby, though you are pleased to smile; and their obstinacy will defy all your threats. Besides, what have we against them? The one is an

undoubted and confessed enemy, of whom, God wot, we have enow; and the other, a paltering trimmer, of whom we have got yet more amongst us. Moreover they have both said their worst: let them begone, say I; and ye that are cunning in such matters, may make a merit of it, if ye list."

"Well spoken, most sapient general," cried Digby; "and with your good leave, my lords and gentlemen, in order to prevent all further debate, I am content that it shall be even so." Finding that this was the general opinion, this versatile statesman then called me over to him, and commissioned me to escort Sir Janus and his confederate safely beyond reach of the garrison of Nottingham.

"I need not impress on you," he said, "the importance of convincing Sir Janus that the King is still and always ready to receive him into favour; and that it is to prove our belief of his real loyalty that I send you, his friend and near neighbour, to bear him company."

I was well pleased to undertake this office for Zillah's father, and not sorry to escape

from further attendance on a council that appeared to me so little in accordance with my preconceived notions of such an assembly.

I found the prisoners in the same apartment, but the relation between them appeared quite changed; Hezekiah now seemed to be the patron, the Baronet a subordinate: the former paced the room with a firm and rapid step; the latter sat disconsolately at the window, leaning his grey beard upon his hand, and gazing ruefully on the iron bars.

As soon as I informed these uncongenial associates of the purport of my visit, Sir Janus joyfully started up, eager to be gone, but his companion informed me that he had some business to transact in the town. "Either I am a prisoner, or else free," he said; "either detain me, or intermeddle not."

I replied that I had been prescribed a simple duty, which I must perform literally; and, in short, I and my charge were soon riding forth along the valley of the Trent. The Puritan kept aloof in stern silence, but his companion entered eagerly into conversation.

“Sad times are these, my young ‘friend,” he said, “when an honest man must either pass for a truculent Cavalier, or a treasonable Roundhead: the sabre bridge of Al Sirat is not more difficult to a Mussulman, than the path of neutrality is now to an Englishman. I have done my best towards both parties, for, to tell you the truth, though I have nothing to hope from either, I do not know which to fear most. I betook myself to Nottingham to seek the King, and here I find myself unexpectedly, as you will witness, sent forward, will I, nill I, to his opponent—the Earl of Essex!”

I replied, that at present the Roundheads appeared the safer side; but as his own presence and protection were so important to his family in times like the present, I hoped for their sakes he would not be long detained in the rebel camp.

“It is for these reasons,” I added, “that I gladly undertook to be your escort; your home is so closely associated in my imagination with my own, that it is almost as dear to me.”

“Thanks, thanks, kind Reginald!” said Sir

Janus hastily, as if afraid I should say more upon this subject; “and now methinks by the glimmer of the moonlight on yonder armour, that your escort is accomplished, and we may part.” He pointed to the corner of a grove where a body of horse were assembled, and at the same time he drew nearer to his Puritan companion. “Now, farewell, good lad,” he added, “you will bear me witness, that it was by Lord Digby’s orders that I have left the King’s quarters.”

As Sir Janus thus spoke, I heard a trumpet in our rear, which was answered by the party in front, and the next moment two bodies of troopers, advancing at full trot, enclosed our party between their ranks: they wore the orange scarf—the badge of Essex.

The officer in command having halted his men, and of course our party also, rode up to Hezekiah and exchanged with him some words; then turning to me, he desired me to consider myself his prisoner and give up my sword! My sword flew from its sheath rapidly enough by mere instinct, but it was not in surrender!

At the same time, hand and spur brought my horse well together, and I rode him at a wall that the ambushade considered must have hemmed me in. The gallant brute cleared it at a bound from where he stood, and landed in a green meadow at the other side.

“Prisoner!” I then shouted to my challengers; “I defy your best power, with treachery to boot, to lay hands upon me whilst I live.” I could hear the clank of a score of carbines as the troopers took aim, and as I dashed away over the soft grass I could also hear a deep, stern, and well-known voice call out: “Recover your arms! Slay not, but pursue!” and then the road rang with the clumsy galloping of the Roundhead horse. I soon regained the road, and excited as I was by the fray, I felt tempted to wait for my foremost pursuer, and let him taste the sword of a Cavalier; but then my father’s counsel stayed my own proud will, and I rode forward until I reached the gates of Nottingham in safety.

As soon as I had seen the good Satan stabled and well cared for, I went to the castle to give

an account of my adventure, but the gates were locked, the warders set, and Lord Digby gone, none knew whither. I then repaired to the Antlers, and long before I reached that hostel I could hear joyous voices resounding in loud laughter or wild chorus through the open window of the inn-parlour.

Such scenes as I was about to witness were new to me, and I paused for a moment on the threshold; but hearing the governor of the castle's voice high above the din, I entered, and for the first time beheld assembled the chief officers on whom the King and kingdom depended for their safety!

As I before mentioned, a massy oaken table ran from side to side of the long low parlour, and this was attended by two long benches of equal length; at the upper end was a huge chair, in which Digby sate installed as president. The benches were closely occupied by carousing Cavaliers; not a place was vacant, and not a voice was silent as the health of the new governor was pledged in the best wine the inn afforded. I have often thought of that picture

since ; when many of those who composed it lay stiff and stark around me on the blood-stained field.

There were some fifty Cavaliers of all ages, and of every variety of dress and feature seated there. The grim veteran of the Low Countries, in stained buff, and with fiercely curled moustachios, side by side with the young gallant in velvet or plush doublet, his lip scarcely shaded with a downy beard, and his long hair so lately fondled by fair hands falling from a face flushed with wine, and the excitement of a first carouse. A glittering row of swords hung against the wall, surmounted by as many helmets or plumed hats : at every movement of the revellers, as the flagons clashed, armour or arms clanked, and afforded martial accompaniment to the stormy song or cheer.

At the head of this fiercely gay company sate Digby, apparently the gayest and most careless of them all, though to my knowledge, days and nights of anxious and dangerous watching had past over him since he had tasted of repose. This singular man, having passed

the morning among the graver councillors of the King, discussing various and tedious concerns of State, now seized this evening's opportunity to ingratiate himself with the mere tools of his previous elaborate designs. No one could so well adapt himself to all men's tastes: he was master of every mood, and acquainted with the vagaries of every passion. It was especially in a scene like the present that the versatility and exquisite pliancy of his talents was displayed: by some well applied word, or look, or smile, he had already established a certain intimacy with every man at table, old or young, gay or grave, grim veteran or smooth-faced youth, chivalrous aspirant or sensual debauchee.

As soon as his eye caught mine, he exclaimed, "A place! a place! for our new recruit! What now, my gallant Paladin; what new adventures hast thou crowded into the twenty-four hours that have chimed on old St. Simon's Tower since we began our enterprise?" He heard my report. "What! treachery, ambuscadoes, and hair-breadth 'scapes?"

why 'tis a tale fit for a stirring time like this, to whet the appetite of young blood for strife, and recal the fervour of the old. Gallant gentlemen all! I present to you a worthy son of the noble House of Hastings, to whose conduct and bravery I owe my safety here, and who has seized the opportunity of our entertainment to encounter the vanguard of the rebels."

While Digby continued in this strain, I was cordially greeted by the Cavalier whom I have previously mentioned; the owner of the steed Satanic that had carried me so well in my late encounter.

"Such has been the hurry of events," said he, "that I have not yet introduced myself to you or claimed the honour of kindred; my name is Harry Hastings, more commonly known I fear, as Harry Hotspur, and though I have had the fortune to command my Lord Hastings' troop of horse in that scurvy Scotch business, I was prevented from becoming acquainted with his son by your absence during my only visit at Beaumanoir." It was indeed

my fearless and much-feared cousin, who has since held out his castle of Ashby de la Zouche for years, kept the Roundheads in check throughout three counties, and well won for himself the title of Lord Loughborough.

I cordially accepted his proffered friendship and thanked him once more for the use of his charger.

“A better never served a hunter’s or a soldier’s need,” said he, “though I say it, who bred and broke him under mine own hand and eye. And now, my cousin, you must let me cement our new found friendship by a trifling gift: this horse is indeed too light for my burly person, but he will carry you like a cherubim, and to-morrow you must let him be removed to your stable, if his ill-boding name does not daunt you, which I believe to be no easy matter”

Sir Jacob Astley, who sat next to my young kinsman, declared the name to be a sin and shame; and Wilmot, having eagerly inquired the subject of the worthy old Cavalier’s indignation, immediately gave the name the benefit of his

unqualified praise ; defending its propriety with much profanity and wit.

“ If thou show thyself,” said Sir Jacob, “ as bold against the enemies of the King as against the enemy of mankind, it will be well for our cause. I pray heaven thou hast not as good an understanding with them !”

Sir Marmaduke Langdale stopped the conversation at this dangerous juncture, by proposing to pledge my health, and immediately all individual conversation was lost in the confused roar of general conviviality.

The hilarity, however, was soon interrupted by a trooper, whose appearance showed that he had ridden in hot haste, and the poor fellow’s gauntleted hand shook, as he presented a small note to Lord Digby. The latter filled his own beaker to the brim, and handed it to the messenger, who eagerly quaffed its red contents.

“ Gentlemen,” said Lord Digby, with a congratulatory air, “ I should regret to break up this good company, were it not that these tidings are of such interest. The crop-eared

knaves of Coventry have not only refused the King admittance into their smoky town, but have fired on his Majesty's train, and, I fear me, have slain some. My Lord Wilmot, you and all your troops will prepare to mount instantly and set forward to the King's assistance. We may expect to see you return in a day or two as the escort of his Majesty."

Wilmot and his officers sprang from their seats with alacrity. With no small outlay of round oaths, down came armour and arms, clanging from the walls, and a few hasty salutations being exchanged, some twenty Cavaliers left the room, and the rest dispersed themselves more slowly. Soon afterwards we heard trumpets far and near, and just as I was sinking to rest, I caught the tramp of horse, the sound of which mingled with and shaped my dreams.

Notwithstanding the excitement of such novel scenes, I slept soundly, and was only wakened by the stir of the crowded town. I sprang to my feet with the consciousness of having much to learn and to perform, and as I hastily made what Digby would have called my

toilette, my attention was more occupied with the little details of life that were passing in the street. Here a long waggon of hay was urged towards the cavalry stables ; there, a waggon load of pike handles was trundling up to the stores, superintended by Sir Jacob Astley, who was already on foot and ready to scrutinize them : huge butts of ale were to be seen dragged along by willing soldiers towards their quarters ; and armourer's apprentices, laden with back and breast pieces, potts and taces, were constantly hurrying by. Booths full of London wares, and, in many cases, with London warehousemen as well, were fitted up, lining the whole street ; and rustics, whose ordinary markets were in distant villages, now thronged the good city of Nottingham with fowls and eggs, and other farm-yard products, for which they received (or were promised) threefold prices.

Before I was dressed, I heard the sonorous voice of Harry Hastings calling lustily for his morning draught, and swearing at the oak table, for being the hardest board he had ever

slept upon. To this necessity had he been compelled at last by the repletion of the house, and by his disinclination "to presume on our brief acquaintance," as he said, by taking my miserable straw-stuffed bed from under me; all the other rooms in the house were well barricaded before the orgies of the preceding night had well begun. Such a state of things had made the whole household wakeful, and Dame Deerly herself was already stirring and arranged in her best attire.

From her we learnt that in the course of the night, "some great foreign Prince had arrived; and on finding the King was absent, had taken horse, almost without taking breath, and spurred away like mad on the road to Coventry; some say it is Prince Rupert Palatine, and some that it is the Soldan himself come to fight for our religion and rightful Majesty."

Anxious for surer intelligence, I issued forth from the Antlers to seek Lord Digby, whom I found in the midst of business at the castle.

"Welcome, my Paladin," he cried, pushing

from him a heap of papers, and stretching his limbs, weariedly, "I hope you have slept better than has been my lot. Scarcely was I in bed when a despatch arrives from the King, ordering petards to be forwarded forthwith to Coventry; and when Will Legge and I had, at length, got a couple of 'potticaries mortars to serve for the purpose, I laid down again. I was soon roused, however, by the news that that blundering Prince Rupert was arrived, and was storming for information about the King. I got his highness a fresh horse and guide, and sent him forward like a tennis ball. Then comes a trumpet from Essex, apologizing for an affront offered yester-even to a Cavalier, by a vidette, which it appears had been sent to look out for the return of your Puritan's embassy; and one of the present objects of this second mission is to take back the associates of friend Hezekiah, whom Hyde ordered, forsooth, to be honourably lodged at the Antlers; they now fear that in reprisal for their rascally attack on you, we shall detain this *canaille*, of whom we shall have only too good a riddance. By Pluto, a governor of

a royal castle in these times had need of as many heads as Cerberus in order to understand, and as many hands as Briareus, to sign all these papers ; not a base peasant of them all will trust the King with a sack of corn, unless he has a promissory note under my hand to pay for it.”

This day passed slowly away, it was the eve of that appointed for the setting up of the standard, and though no person expected that appointment would be kept, a sort of feverish suspense almost universally prevailed. In the afternoon, however, my brother Hugo arrived at the head of as goodly a troop of horse as ever armed for the King. I had thenceforth sufficient occupation all the remainder of the evening in providing for their wants, to prevent my time from passing slowly. I had also much to learn from my brother, brief as had been his stay after my departure. He told me he had left my father so much recovered that he rode with his troop some miles, and in bidding them farewell had spoken of leading them before long in person. He told me also that he had

been at the castle to take leave of Zillah and Phœbe; that the former gave him rather the impression of Deborah, when she warned the Israelites against battle, but that her sister was all tenderness, anxiety, and devotion.

“Fancy that light-hearted, laughing girl,” he said, “giving me sage counsel with tearful eyes, and in a voice so earnest, it might have penetrated a tougher heart than mine. Amongst other matters that surprised me, she told me to beware, and to warn you, of that most accomplished and clever person whom she met under your escort. She also told me she had seen your page Bryan in long conference with Zillah, who had appeared sadder and more stern than ever after your last interview. Poor Phœbe! her prospects are dismal enough, for one like her; prisoned in that gloomy castle, which has assumed a decidedly puritanic caste since the Parliament waxed so strong. It was a hard task to leave her. From the moment, however, that I mounted and rode away from our valley, I felt lighter at heart than I have done for many, many months, and I almost hope that in

the stir of our future life, I shall be able to forget the past.”

It was very touching to hear the mournful accents of this boy-soldier as he spoke of his past life—pure and innocent though it had been. Indeed he might have stood for the picture of one of the angel warriors in the old Christian stories, as he leant pensively on his sword, his long auburn hair curling down his cuirass, and his tearful blue eyes fixed steadily on heaven, as if there lay his only hope.

CHAPTER XII.

The field all iron cast a gleaming brown,
 Nor wanted clouds of foot; nor, on each horn
 Cuirassiers, all in steel for standing fight.

* * * * *

Such and so glorious was their chivalry.

MILTON.

I PASS over the raising of the standard, and the consequent events that are fresh in every recollection, and not easy to be obliterated. Never seemed a nation more reluctant than was England to go to war; but when once thoroughly uproused, her efforts were prodigious. An army gathered round the King, as if by magic, and when we marched away from Shrewsbury upon London (as we fondly hoped), we mustered

upwards of ten thousand fighting men, besides a crowd of mere idlers, courtiers, and officials. I also pass over the various incidents of our march, and arrive at once at my first battle-field.

On the morning of the 23rd of October, we found ourselves descending the steep side of Edgehill to form in the plain below, where the enemy stood ready to receive us. Hugo rode that day in Lord Bernard Stuart's Life Guards, which I had hoped would have remained in attendance on the King; but when our battle-line was forming, the life guards requested and obtained permission to charge with Rupert's corps of cavalry, to which my troop also was attached. I was not, however, destined to command it on that fatal day.

It was a soft beautiful Sabbath morning that rose over the hills and meadows of the peaceful looking Vale of Redhorse. The church bells were pealing from the belfry of Keinton, and the sound passed solemnly over our wide spread hosts, as they mustered for the work of slaughter. I then experienced no elation at the prospect of the approaching battle; all the high

hopes and enthusiasm I had felt and cherished concerning my first fight, suddenly gave way before the solemn and saddening realities of that hour. There is something in the sight of a real enemy almost unintelligible to a young, and innocent, and inexperienced mind. Men, by thousands, speaking the same language, and, in many instances, thinking the same thoughts, were there, some half-mile away, carefully calculating how they could best destroy and crush us. Yet these men might have been good and kindly neighbours to us, as to each other, but for the one great cause ; the hand and voice that was soon to deal death against his fellow countryman would have offered to him kindly greetings a few months before.

If such thoughts would force their way even into my boyish mind, how heavily they must have weighed on the soul of our King. And, truly, as we defiled before him to the fatal plain below, never did I see an expression of such deep and settled sorrow on the countenance of any man ; a heavy gloom had fallen on it, which nothing but the brightness of his eyes relieved.

There was ample time to observe him, for our whole force had but two paths to descend by from the brow of the hill, and these two met in one, near where his Majesty was standing. Our column was obliged to halt just there, in order to allow the artillery to pass by, and I observed all that related to the King with the deepest interest. His thoughtful but penetrating glance seemed to scan every spot of ground and him who occupied it, whether friend or foe ; and sometimes that glance would wander for a moment to the far hill side, where the two young princes stood gazing on the scene full of such moment to their future. He scarcely looked at the different officers who came to announce information, or to require it, but he started at the sound of a deep and somewhat agitated voice, that uttered "God save your Majesty !"

The speaker's countenance was concealed by a helmet, of which the visor was only raised as he turned to the King. I listened, however, with emotion to the voice, and felt my heart

stir within me as the King extended his hand frankly and cordially, and exclaimed :

“Lord Hastings, I hail it as a good omen for this day, that you return to my side. Nay, man, speak not of the cause that made you absent ; I remember it at this hour, perhaps too well, especially when I see yonder traitor, Holland, in the ranks of mine enemies. Enough for the present, my true-hearted and gallant Hastings ! if it shall please Heaven that we both survive this day, hasten to me when it is over. Now tell those troopers to move on, or the rebels will have the triumph of the first move, and there is my nephew Rupert, impatiently waving his sword below for the troops to advance.”

As the King spoke, the pathway had become clear. My father was instantly at my side, and an unsuppressed shout of welcome and triumph burst from his faithful followers. As we pressed on to our position on the right, I had time for very few words of greeting ; but my father informed me that he had travelled all night to overtake the army. He had suffered so much

from anxiety at home, that he determined to follow us. That though still not strong, he hoped to see that one brave battle which must decide the fate of England, as he then vainly thought.

Such was not the will of Providence. But the hour of the fight was come ; and so busily had I been occupied with our men, that I had scarcely time to glance along our line, before the battle-smoke concealed it from my eyes. I could only observe that our force was ordered precisely in the same manner as that of our enemies ; the cavalry on either wing, flanked by Aston's and Heydon's artillery, and the infantry in the centre, where the stout and true Earl of Lindsay fought among his Lincoln volunteers.

I heard a few guns upon the left, then Prince Rupert rushed to the front of our column, and shouted to the trumpeters to sound a charge.

Out they spoke cheerily, and all my enthusiasm blazed up again fiercely from the ashes where it had smouldered. God ! what a mys-

tery hast thou made us! A few minutes before, at the tone of the gentle church bells, I felt as if I could have pressed every foeman to my heart, and entreated him to change his evil ways; now, at the sound of the scornful trumpets, and the glitter of the sword, my mood was changed. I thought I could have swept the enemy from the earth even as the Destroying Angel of the Assyrians: I longed to gather their pikes in armfuls, like the Switzer's Arnold, and defy death and suffering alike, as our Cavaliers dashed over my body through the human gap that I had made.

Seldom has a thought been sooner followed by a deed. With one wild fierce shout, we dashed our spurs into our horses' flanks, and as we burst upon the enemy, the force of our own shock cast us asunder; the Roundhead cavalry never waited for a stroke, nor received one, until they were overtaken in their desperate flight; but the infantry stood firm, as Prince Rupert's column rushed past them like a whirlwind. We on the left, meanwhile, were borne against

Stapleton's infantry, who received us with steady hearts and levelled pikes. Still shouting "for God and for the King," I plunged among them, and as the weight of my gallant horse bore me through, I could feel the scratch of a dozen pikes that glanced along my armour ; the next moment, I was flung upon the ground, and a rush of men passing over me, deprived me of all consciousness.

I know not how long I lay in that sudden swoon, but as I slowly recovered, I could still faintly hear the shouts and yells of desperate fight approaching and retiring, and the ground shaken under me, as masses of cavalry charged to and fro. Gradually the sounds grew more distinct, and vision returned to my eyes ; I looked round, and—Heaven !—what a cruel spectacle revealed itself ! The hand that I pressed on the ground to raise myself, splashed in red blood, which dyed my cuirass with many a stain. Dead and mangled horses lay on either side of me, round them lay many slain and wounded men ; the latter, with low moans and

stifled prayers or execrations, endeavouring to writhe their gashed limbs into some less painful attitude. Most of them were enemies, but all thought of enmity seemed to have passed away. Not a few of these poor fellows had belonged to my own devoted troop, who had sealed their fidelity with their lives, in endeavouring to support my charge. It was miserable to me to see those honest manly features, so well known in childhood's happier days, now distorted or pale, as the sword or musket had destroyed them. I not only knew every yeoman who lay there, but every child and village girl, that vainly expected the return to his home of their slain soldier. A young trumpeter, whose first attempts to sound a horn I well remembered in our woodland chase, lay close to me, empaled by a Roundhead pike; and across his breast lay his father, his grey hairs dabbled in the blood that streamed from the boy's side. He was a sturdy forester who taught me woodcraft long ago; his right hand still grasped the sword with which he had severed the arm that

smote his son, but a small mark upon his manly forehead showed where the bullet had freed the childless father from all sorrow.

Many such groups lay scattered widely round, formed by death and agony into terrible picturesqueness. Not one mere mercenary soldier could I see ; all were honest, simple-looking countrymen, who wore their soldier garments awkwardly, as they lay there, manuring their native soil with rich red blood. As my dizzy eyes wandered over the dead and dying and slowly recognized each altered face, they were arrested by the prostrate form of an officer, whose crimson scarf showed him to be a Cavalier. I dragged myself towards where he lay upon his face, bathed in gore. I lifted him gently, raised his visor, and beheld—my father !

He was not dead ; but my joy on finding him alive was soon checked, when I observed that indescribable pallor, which even to the inexperienced eye is the sure sign of approaching death. Once more, however, he smiled — smiled upon me with a look of tenderest affection, and his warm heart rallied its energies

again as it spoke in his kindling eye and voice. He faintly and solemnly blessed me ; and through the roar of war's infernal din, his whispered words fell distinctly on my ear like the accents of an angel.

“ Mourn not ;” he said softly, “ no one ever so rejoiced to live as I to die—to die thus on my son's brave breast, while my King's enemies are scattered before him. Now I have no earthly fear to mingle with my hope of heaven ! Long may you live, my son, loyally, righteously—and when you die, may you welcome death as I do now.”

He paused, and some inarticulate words rattled in his throat ; but his last heart's pulse lent vigour to his voice, as he saw some of our troopers returning from the chase ; they flung themselves from their horses, and gazed with clasped hands and mournful eye upon their lord. He tried to raise himself, and pointing with his trembling hand to where the battle was still struggling, he exclaimed :

“ The standard is taken ! To the rescue—to the rescue ! This day or never—fight—.”

Then, after a moment's pause, he rose with a dying effort from my arms and strove to utter his last war-cry.

“For God—” he cried, and his voice failed, his head sunk upon his cuirass, as he murmured, “and for the King.” And then he ceased to breathe.

I felt the force of his last words, and the agony of my heart sought refuge in desperate action. I flung a fallen standard over the gallant dead, and forgetful of all bodily pain and wounds, I sprang to my feet. My horse, fearless and well-trained had never left me. Though rolled over and trampled on, and bleeding from a dozen wounds he was quietly grazing on a patch of grass, from which he had pawed away the dead body of a little drummer-boy.

I remember nothing more of that fearful day, except charging across the plain, strewn as it was with parties confusedly attacking and flying. I felt my strength failing me, and I only sought to reach the first *mélée*, to fling myself among the enemy, and perish in the

clash of swords. I tried to collect myself—to take in the position of the battle, and lead my scanty troops where they were most needed, but in vain; my brain reeled, and it was only by a glimmering instinct that I led—still at a furious gallop—my willing men against the first body of orange scarfs that I could reach. My troops cheered bravely as we dashed in among the enemy, and I can remember no more.

CHAPTER XIII.

Fain would I go to chafe his paly lips
With twenty thousand kisses, and to drain
Upon his face an ocean of salt tears,
To tell my love unto his dumb deaf trunk,
And with my finger feel his hand unfeeling.

SHAKSPERE.

Mas invidia he de vos, conde.

I rather envy thee thy doom,
Than mourn for thee, or pity thee ;
For such an honourable death
Is glory's immortality.—LOPE DE SOSA.

WHEN I returned to consciousness, I found myself lying on a bed of leaves, over which a soldier's cloak had been carefully arranged. I was in a tent, and through the foldings of the canvas door I could see the stars, with freezing brightness, shining down upon the battle-plain below.

A few watch-fires marked the ground where the videttes of both armies now occupied the position which the line of battle had held during the day. Here and there, on the hill-side, burnt a few other scanty fires. The tent I lay in stood upon the summit of Edgehill, and from vague, lazy noises I heard around me, I guessed that the camp was there also. As my eyes became accustomed to the light, I observed a glimmering in the darkness opposite my bed, and there I soon recognized the dead body of my father, armed from head to heel, as he had fallen, but carefully disposed on a crimson cloak. His hands were crossed in warrior-fashion upon his breast, and his countenance—so sweetly grave—seemed to say that his spirit had parted from his last battle into happy rest.

I had dragged my maimed and bruised body near to his, and was kneeling by his side, when the canvas door was darkened, and then Hugo was kneeling by my side. How we prayed I cannot, *what* we prayed, I will not tell; but from that time forth we mourned for him that was gone no more. As sorrow, and disappointment, and despair fell upon us and on the

cause he loved, we could think with pleasure and gratitude how mercifully he had been spared from the evil days to come.

Henceforth Hugo and I were alone in the world; we parted no more; we shared the same bed and board; fought in the same battle when it came, charged side by side, and held the same watch when the fight was done.

The day after the battle of Edgehill I was carried on a litter to Banbury, and thence in a few days to Oxford, where I recovered so rapidly as to take part in the King's advance on London in November. During my illness, I was watchfully and tenderly cared for by Bryan, who gave me by degrees his own account of the battle in which I had suffered so much, yet of which I knew so little.

“Well, my lord,” said he, “you remember you ordered me to stay on the outskirts of the battle with the spare horse. I was scarcely set, when the trumpets screeched, and your honour and the rest went at the enemy at such a rate, that the sight left my eyes; whether it was the beating of my heart that pushed out the tears, or the dust that blinded me I cannot tell.

But I soon saw clear enough, and there was the Prince cutting away like mad, well in front of all the troops, that seemed to be running a race after him ; and then I saw my Lord that was (rest his soul) leading on the second lines, and seeing there was nothing more to do in front, he turned to the left against the rebel foot, and the next minute your honour was in amongst their pikes, and down : and poor old Blount, who was close to you, thinking fit to follow you always, went down on top of you, and the rebels closed over all like waves of the sea, and for a little while the rest of the troop was turned aside. But then my Lord came up, riding quite steady and easy like, and rode in among them as if they were a field of wheat : and the rest followed, and there was great struggling for a little while, till Master Hugo came back from the chase with the gentleman-troop of my Lord Bernard and drove away the rebels like chaff, and followed them too, for he knew nothing of your honour's fall. Meanwhile, the King's Horse on the left cleared their part of the field ; and I thought the business was done, when I saw the middle of the

rebels pushing on with their foot till they drove ours in, and took the royal standard: it was a long time before they were beaten back, and the King got his flag into his own hands again. And then there was such confusion that I couldn't tell what was happening, or who was beating, or who was winning; and it's my own belief that our General and my Lord Essex knew as little as I did; but at last both sides began to look for their own people, and got together as fast as they could; to talk about their great victory, and to settle how they could most conveniently get away from those that they had conquered so entirely."

"But," said I, "what were you doing all this time?"

"Oh! I forgot to tell your honour that just as I was going down to you, that rollicking, swearing gentleman that gave you the devil (here he crossed himself)—Satan I mean—came up to me all bloody and out of breath, and bid me give him your horse; and when I wouldn't, he pitched me off him as if I was a sack, and the next minute he was on him, and away like a madman, looking for somebody to fight with.

In the meantime, a bullet slipped into the left calf of my leg, and laid me on the green grass, so that I had nothing to do but look about me, and wonder how your honour was getting on among the rebels. By dint of the purse of gold my Lord Pedlar gave me, I persuaded the doctor's men to take me to where I saw your honour fall, but you were gone; and though I found Sam Willis, and Bill Everard, and many more of our boys from home there, the only one that had any life worth mentioning left was old Blount, who had a sore whack upon the head and a broken leg, so that he couldn't stand, and was cleaning one of your honour's pistols to amuse himself. He told me that Master Hugo had carried you off, and promised to send back for himself; and now he's hard by and doing well, only that he's in great trouble about the key of your honour's thrunk, that the camp women picked his pocket of when he was in his swoon; for those she-devils follow as close on the soldiers in the fight as the gleaners after the harvesters."

This confused narration was, after all, one

of the best accounts I ever heard of this memorable battle; from my brother Hugo to the King, every one had a different version of it. Digby indeed swore that Prince Rupert lost the battle, and Mr. Hyde was ready enough to show how it might have been won, and Sir Philip Warwick swore it *was* won. All I know is, that nothing—not even defeat—could have been more disastrous to England than this undecided battle. I verily believe that the Parliament, if then victorious, would have been forced by the country to give the King better terms, than now, after all their defeats they are disposed to offer. Our men fought only too well, and forgot the better part of valour—that discretion and presence of mind which alone can dignify and turn it to a successful issue.

Six months passed by in various triumphs and defeat. The King had knighted Hugo on the field of Keinton for rescuing the royal standard from the Roundheads. His Majesty had also condoled with us kindly on Lord

Hasting's death, and had borne honourable testimony to his merit and his virtues ; but my dead father's service was naturally soon forgotten in the crowd of living claimants for court favour.

My brother and I were generally with Prince Rupert, whose restless spirit of enterprise, all-daring courage, and quenchless love of adventure kept us in constant occupation, which was well suited to our circumstances, if not always to our feelings.

Blount now recovered from his wounds ; and looking more grim than ever from a deep scar upon his cheek, was still constant in his attendance, while Bryan hovered round me with pertinacious zeal to do me service. My black horse too, had survived our various dangers, and was still unrivalled in the chase as well as in the ranks.

The summer of 1643 closed in with a stormy autumn, that ended the campaign sooner than usual. Mutually worn out, but mutually unforgiving, the two great parties

that divided England, were now fain to retire to their winter-quarters, the Roundheads concentrated in and about London, we for the most part at Oxford or at York.

CHAPTER XIV.

Triumph and art ride sparkling in her eyes,
Mistrusting what they look on—and her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor prospect of affection.
She is so self-endear'd.

SHAKESPERE.

OXFORD then presented scenes of great brilliance and attractions. Every one knows the soft and solemn beauty of the city itself, and the rich variety of the country round it, in time of peace. Now, however, that Mars and Bellona had taken up their residence in the quarters of Minerva, the ancient University assumed a new aspect. The colleges were, for the most part, barracks or hospitals,

and every little lodging-house was tenanted by rich or noble personages. The presence of the court, its centrality for receiving information, its charming society, varied by every rank, and class, and profession, added to its comparative safety—all these rendered Oxford the most popular residence in England, especially for those who were accustomed to reside erewhile in London. Here, however, all the elements of metropolitan dissipation were concentrated in so small a space, that their attractions and influence were dangerously increased. My brother Hugo, formed to be a favourite with every one who could appreciate genius, grace, and gallantry, was gradually won from his sorrowful seclusion. Indeed, there were eyes and voices then gleaming and sounding about our warlike court that might have won a hermit from his “sainted solitude;” and even I, although possessed by a love almost religious for Zillah, could at least appreciate the danger, that others, not so fortified, must undergo. The brilliant Duchess of Richmond, and the romantic, learned and beautiful sister

of Sir Charles Lucas, were considered as the reigning powers in the Court of Love; but they had many formidable rivals.

Our fiery chief, Rupert, was accustomed to scoff at all such sentiments as women could inspire; and of a truth, I believe he never knew the voice that could enthral him for a moment when the trumpet sounded; or of an assignation that would not have been joyfully exchanged for a chance of meeting with an enemy. Nevertheless, this Prince of Cavaliers was not entirely free from the general contagion; and if the Duchess of Richmond's wishes were not law for him, they came nearer to it than any other authority on earth.

One morning I had been making a reconnoissance round the walls of Oxford with the Prince. We daily expected the approach of Lord Essex, who we knew had determined strictly to invest the city: our gay company accordingly, and chiefly the ladies, were making the most of their brief time of freedom, by traversing the neighbourhood

in all directions with hawk and hound. More than one such party we had already passed without notice, for whilst on military duty, Rupert had no eyes or ears for aught else. As our round of examination was accomplished, however, and we were about to re-enter the town, we caught sight of a group passing along by the river, and amongst them was conspicuous the snow-white palfrey of the Duchess. The footmen who explored the game with small black spaniels, had just flushed a heron, and a hawk soared gallantly away from the gracefully raised arm of her Grace. Just then, with as quick an eye as that of her favourite bird, she perceived the Prince, and beckoned to him with a winning imperiousness, which even he was fain to obey; he grumbled, however, as he turned his horse's head, and told me that he would not tax my patience to attend him farther.

“Nay, Sir,” I replied, “your Highness is never wont to dismiss me in times of trial, and if I may judge from appearances, yonder

party is more formidable than a column of Hazlerigg's lobsters."

"So it is—so it is!" exclaimed the Prince, "with the women alone, one can manage to cope, but they are so infested with the womanish court witlings, that they remind me of Gustavus Adolphus's cavalry mixed up with musketry; while engaging with one in fair fight, the other torments our life out. There, by St. George! is that fair and false French coxcomb, Digby, telling the Duchess some grinning story about me no doubt—but no—he seems to point to you."

Just then the hawk towered bravely, and by a sudden swoop, seemed to fling himself and the heron in one fluttering mass upon the ground. The Duchess and her party went off at a gallop, and the Prince, with an oath of eagerness or anger, dashed after them. We came up as the falcon, re-hooded, was placed upon his lady's wrist, still ruffling his feathers in the pride of victory.

"When will you heroes rest thus tran-

quilly contented, after your triumphs," said the Duchess with a sort of sigh, as she held up the brave bird towards the Prince.

"There is but one who can claim your Grace's hand as his reward," interposed Lord Digby, maliciously, "and *he* seems perfectly contented."

The Duke was indeed apparently quite satisfied; his hand was on the mane of Mistress Lucas's palfrey, and her whispering voice was breathing some not unwelcome nonsense in his ear, when arrested by the general attention that was at once turned towards them. Digby had succeeded at one stroke in rendering four people uncomfortable, and the Prince especially. He followed up his success, addressing the latter in a deferential air :

"Your Highness set us an admirable example of discipline just now, and lost me a heavy wager by obeying so promptly a signal of recal."

Rupert's countenance darkened into an expression that was not pleasant to behold, as he retorted :

“If I had set an example of anything wise or worthy, your Lordship would have been as slow to notice as to follow it.”

Digby's arrowy retorts had always Parthian activity, even in retreat.

“Your Highness' high nature is ever proposing to yourself what seems impossible to others,” he replied, with a complimentary bow and curl of the lip.

“Come, Prince,” said the Duchess, interposing, “and let me present to you a member of your garrison, who, if she prove as formidable to the public as to private peace, may prove a very Helen to our Troy.” So saying, she drew over to her the rein of a lady's horse, and gracefully throwing off the veil of its rider, discovered, to my surprise, the lovely, blushing face of Phoebe Demiroy.

I scarcely recognized my young playmate at first, so much had six months altered the character of her countenance: her eyes had acquired more brilliancy and power, and were more darkly shaded; the wavy, uncertain contour of her mouth and chin had given way to a

sculptured firmness ; her figure had become finely developed, and her ringing voice had assumed a rich and mellow intonation.

The Prince's stern, but handsome features, involuntarily confessed the pleasure that he felt as he doffed his plumed hat and bowed to his charger's mane in honour of the introduction. After a few formal phrases, however, he turned to the Duchess, and resigned Phoebe to my eager greetings and inquiries.

“Why and how I came hither is easily answered,” said she. “For the first, my heart and yearnings ever followed the fortunes of the King, and it may be, some others who uphold his sacred cause. My father's anxiety to be well with all parties assisted my own wishes, by transferring me to the care of my kinswoman, the Duchess. As to *how* I was transferred ; I came last night with the treaters of peace from Reading, and I believe my presence is the only result of all their labours and discussions with the Roundhead chief. As to Zillah, she is in her glory, in the very midst of rebels at the grim old castle

of Nottingham with our most austere kinsman, Hutchinson, and his tiresome wife. She is now coming to Reading, however, to give her company to my father. But there's a beckon for me, so I must say good bye. Come and see me at Merton College; you will find me over the porter's lodge, where I have usurped some banished student's rooms. I always 'sport my oak,' so you must knock three times slowly. Lady d'Aubigny *hangs out* (I believe our fellow gownsmen call it), in the same apartment, and dislikes as much as I do being disturbed by those Court creatures."

So saying, Phœbe cantered forward to pursue the Duchess and her sport, and left me to myself. I instantly sought out Hugo: I knew too well where to find him; in the very apartments that his first love had pointed out.

Kate, Lady d'Aubigny had been widowed by the battle of Edgehill of one of the noblest gentlemen that ever drew a sword for loyalty: gentle, and generous, and brave, he possessed other qualities far more rare in our camp—

a fearless morality and modesty that were proof against all the witty scorners and all the temptations of the Court.

“I thank God,” said he, one day, in reply to one of Wilmot’s scoffs, “I *can* undergo the martyrdom of a blush.”

So could his beautiful and witty wife (now widow) for that matter, when it suited her own purpose; as now when my name was announced, and I apologized for withdrawing her unconscious young admirer on the plea of duty.

“Well, go!” said she to Hugo, “and if, for the future, we must meet more seldom, it will be no regret to you that you have shared and soothed the widow’s sorrow, while you still fight manfully for the good cause which now alone has interest for her upon earth.”

So saying, the lady extended one fair hand to my brother, while with the other she dashed away an ostentatious tear, intended at least as much for the living as for the dead. Hugo hesitated; he was innocent and warm-hearted,

and for him a woman's tear had the power of a whole stream of Lethe. He gave me an imploring look, as if asking me to leave him for a little while ; but something like anger suffused his countenance when he met, instead of sympathy, a sarcastic smile. He was under a momentary spell, which most men can understand ; but it gave way before a stronger one as I whispered :

“ I have news from the castle for you.”

He hastily let go the hand he had still clasped, and followed me promptly in the courtyard below.

“ Hugo,” said I, “ your intimacy with yon syren must cease, and I might regret it for her sake, as you do, if I believed that tear were sincere.”

“ Yes, yes,” he replied, “ I know that I can seldom see her now. Some cousin of the Duchess', is coming to stay in the same rooms with Kate—with Lady d'Aubigny I mean ; but how can you be so unjust as to think she is false in her seeming.”

“ I will answer your last question first,” said I ; “ I know, I thank heaven, little of woman-kind save one, the tried and faithful friend of my childhood and my youth ; she whom our dead father loved, and whose docile heart our mother taught to know its higher destinies. Hugo ! before you and I were left alone in the world—this wild and warring world which yonder trumpet may even now signal us to leave—we were friends as well as brothers. God knows, my brother, that all the sorrow we have shared since then, could scarcely add to the love I ever bore you ; and now, when somewhat of my father’s sense of duty is blended with that love, think you I would give you pain without a cause ? I tell you, I know little of woman’s wiles, or of such as Lady d’Aubigny ; but mere instinct teaches me that the feeling which struggles to display, instead of to conceal itself, is little likely to be true. You ask me what object she can seek in winning your interest ? Why, a mere worldly woman’s object : you are young, handsome,

and already famous, where fame to her is precious; she would fain wear you like some new and brilliant ornament attached to her chatelaine, to exhibit and flaunt in the eye of her rivals—that is to say, of all other womankind. I say not this on mere suspicion: I would not wound your feelings at a venture; but I know that she is at least more intimate with Lord Hawley and Lord Newburgh than with you: nay, I have seen her letters on Rupert's table, lying side by side with a dozen other communications to the careless Prince. I know that she would excuse all this by her political intrigues with which it is her vanity to intermeddle, but her loves have been too various to be discreet. Now pardon me this long exordium to one little word with which I might have spared it, if I did not wish to take from your coming pleasure any bitterness that misplaced regret for another might have mingled with it. The lady who is to share Lady d'Aubigny's apartments is—Phoebe.”

The various emotions that had blended in

Hugo's countenance whilst I was speaking, at once resolved themselves into a burning glow of mingled shame and pleasure as I mentioned this last word. He hung his head, and pressed my arm as his sole reply.

CHAPTER XV.

One drop of blood drawn from thy country's bosom,
Should grieve thee more than streams of foreign gore.

SHAKESPERE.

NOR was there time for more. Whilst I had been speaking, Prince Rupert's trumpets sounded out the well-known call to "boot and saddle," and as usual in such cases, we hastened to the great quadrangle in Christchurch. A single trumpet call was the appointed signal to summon officers, only, to the young General's quarters; a second noticed the regiment of cavalry first for duty to prepare for service; and a third commanded the whole force to turn out as soon as they could gird

on sword and saddle. These arrangements were necessary in the then critical state of the garrison, when the enemy hovered all round us, and the troopers and their horses were dispersed into various nooks and corners in the overcrowded streets. We were therefore accustomed to listen anxiously for a second sound: and now, scarcely had the first died away among the cloistral echoes, when another followed, brave and strong; and then a third. Between each sound there was silence—the deep silence of suspense throughout the city; but the opening blast of the third had scarcely pealed, when in all directions arose a confused hum and the tramp of armed men. Starting up from weary pallet, or carousing can and flaggon, and not a few from hospital wards, the hardy troopers swarmed out into the streets, and disappeared again into the stables and sheds in which their hard-worked horses rested for the while.

Meanwhile, we entered the quadrangle of Christchurch, where already many officers were

assembled, and Rupert, his face beaming with stern pleasure, was communicating to each his orders in a loud and eager voice.

“And now, gentlemen,” he concluded, addressing all, “I have only to remind you that we have not only the cuckoldy Roundheads to beat, but the Cavaliers of the West to give a lesson to. They thought they could take Cirencester by their own swords, and they failed; now it’s for us to do it, while they keep the ground.” (Lord Hertford, with the army of the West, had lately been beaten back from this important town). “Now, gentlemen, let every one look to his men, that they be better equipped than the last time, and, if possible, that they be sober. Warn them strictly against their two besetting sins, want of caution, and love of plunder.—What, sirs?” he continued, looking sternly round him, as he perceived that many of his hearers smiled at his injunction. “What sirs, think you I jest? By the soul of the King, I will hang the first man; be he

lord, or groom, or man-at-arms, that lays hand upon aught but his sword, or the enemy, until I give him leave to plunder."

"Or set him the example," muttered Wilmot almost aloud.

"As to caution," the Prince continued, still speaking rapidly, "I may not always set my men as good an example in this respect as you do, my Lord Wilmot; nor do I consider ours to be a time or a mode of war that allows men of honour to spare their men, much less themselves, when an enemy can be reached, and charged home; but our present business must be a surprise rather than, what we all prefer, an open fight. Let the men have no powder in their bandoleers, but let plenty be at hand.

"See you to this, Will Legge. My Lord Grandison, you will march away, first to Woodstock, and warn Northampton to have his regiment ready by the time we come. You, my Lord Wentworth, will march next, and for this time forbear reminding your men that the Roundheads are 'their brethren.' Sacremet! if you must do so, talk to them of Cain and Abel:

think of your father, my Lord. You, Wilmot, of course, will command the main body; if I hear your men grumble, I shall lay it at your door."

And so the hasty Prince went on; assigning to every man his post, in language, which if not always complimentary or agreeable, was at least terse and easily understood. Whatever he said, none cared to reply, for his fierce vehement will prevailed over even the proud volunteers who served under his command; and during the whole period of the war, he was unchallenged, although every one knew he would never shelter himself behind his rank.

In half an hour the royal horse were paraded, and riding forth in all the pride of martial power, through crowds of spectators, among whom were not a few of the first and fairest of England's daughters. We made a skilful feint to attack Sudely Castle, which drew forth the Cirencester garrison from their strong defences; then quickly turning upon them, we not only beat them back, but entered pell mell with them into their long defended town.

There, there were some terrible scenes for half an hour; and then suddenly, as when a tropical storm has past by, all seemed calm and quiet as before—except the hospitals!

On the following day, we re-entered Oxford, in what was to me sad triumph, leading with us long files of our fellow-countrymen as prisoners. The whole Court came to the gates to welcome us, and the King, gratified by the first victory he had gained for a long time, was also there.

It was a strange sight, and one to make even a young man thoughtful, to behold England's sovereign gazing on the melancholy array of wounded and dejected subjects as they passed under his review. Many of them, sustained by a high spirit, however misplaced, bore themselves with the air of martyrs in a noble cause; and there was one especially, a tall, brave, youth, whom our soldiers had shamefully stripped of his upper garment, and exhibited thereby a form of noble symmetry, gashed with several deep wounds, which obliged him to be carried on horseback. As he passed by the King, the

ladies, and nobles of the Court, he held himself upright with an effort, the agony of which was only visible in the clammy sweat that burst from his pale forehead.

“Dog of a rebel!” exclaimed an old woman in the crowd, when she saw him demean himself with such brave insolence.

The young Puritan turned upon her a look of lofty and unutterable scorn, and fell dead!* A dozen eager servants hastily removed the offending corpse, but its late possessor had triumphed: the incident had spoiled the scene; the King retired, and the remainder of the procession had no spectator belonging to the Court.

I will not dwell longer on the minor details of this mournful war. All that my imagination had pictured of grandeur and proud pleasure in a military career, gave way before the sad and stern reality of experience.

Nevertheless war, whatever it be, has its dangerously bright illusion. It is always a stirring spectacle to see a brave army drawn out for battle, and nothing in our life can equal the

* A fact, also related by Lord Clarendon.

glow and glorious sense of power as we charge thundering over the trembling ground to the fierce music of the trumpets, in chorus with the wild hurrah of our dauntless soldiers. But when the living wall of our foe is reached, and borne down and crushed beneath horses' hoofs; when its living fragments resolve themselves into individual men, shrieking for quarter in our own household language; when we dare not show the pity that we feel, or restrain the maddened trooper's rage against his enemy; then the soul sickens, and we curse the grim mockery that rejoices in such a scene, and dares to call it triumph.

Thus I was musing as I rode towards Oxford, when Lord Falkland joined company with me, and remarked that my aspect was not in keeping with the occasion; "especially," added he, cordially and kindly, "as you distinguished yourself not only in valour, but in clemency—by far the rarer virtue now-a-days."

"To you," I-replied, "both seem so natural, that I take the more friendly your observing any attempt, on my part, to imitate you."

“As to what they call courage,” said Falkland, “I have no pretensions to rival my mastiff in that quality; and as to clemency, to say the truth, I am ashamed to set the life of others against such a stake as that of my own. Whilst in actual strife, I endeavour to believe that it is my duty—as minister at war, you know—” (and here he smiled sadly,) “‘to smite and spare not,’ to use a Puritanism. But often, afterwards, I find myself haunted by what I have done; I can then still my accusing conscience only by reflecting that I have helped to remove some sufferers from evil days to come; and that I myself would be grateful to the sword that should so open for me a way to peace—the only peace that is to be found.”

I was touched by these sad words, and by the confidential tone in which a person so highly considered as Lord Falkland addressed me; I was struck, too, at finding such a coincidence with my own reflections in the sentiments he expressed. I afterwards found, however, that these sentiments were very widely shared, by

almost all, indeed, excepting those who made their subsistence by war, and their fortunes by plunder.

But it struck me that mere patriotism, however strong, was not a sufficiently romantic feeling to account for Lord Falkland's proverbial contempt of death. I suspected some more tender cause: I could not help taking a deep interest in his confession, and I ventured to ask whether peace was well assured to those who sought it by a voluntary death?

“And even if it were,” I added, “can you wish, unsummoned, to leave your high name and all its responsibilities—your home to desolation, and your wife to misery—for the mere sake of noiseless and unanxious sleep?”

Falkland winced: I had touched him where I intended not. The truth was, (as I afterwards understood,) that like most men of a warmly poetic imagination, he had married the wrong woman, having unconsciously disguised and arrayed her in the rich wardrobe of his own ideas. I know not what was the poor

lady's fault ; probably there was none, except her husband's unsatisfied and unsatisfiable aspirations. The ideal woman 'of such a mind as his' is a formidable rival to any real woman of mortal mould.

"Name, home, wife !" he exclaimed ; " the last comprises all three : as she is, so they are valued. If our modern Eves only knew how they can make or unmake the Eden of man's life, they would not so often listen to the serpent vanities, jealousies, and wayward tempers, that play the devil with us. When woman was appointed a helpmate unto man, there was no fierceness in the lion, no poison in the flower ; but when she took the apple and our destiny into her own hands, she seems to have become more changed herself than the world that she plunged in misery."

He paused for a moment, half smiling at his far-fetched accusation, and then added thoughtfully :

" Yet have I seen one such woman as seems qualified to fulfil woman's original sacred mis-

sion, to comfort, ennoble, and bless our doomed race.* One, who, gifted with the grace, and beauty, and intellect of an angel, appears to have all the long-suffering, and gentleness, and tenderness, that befits a child of man. One whose bosom would afford a paradise of rest to the weary and wounded spirit that sought refuge and solace from the self-sacrificing generous heart that beat within."

He was silent for a few minutes, and I listened anxiously to the touching, though untunable voice, that conjured up a vision seldom long absent from my own imagination. I was startled by the question with which he resumed his speech.

"By the bye," he said, "you are a Lincolnshire man; you perhaps know a family named Demiroy? Ah, I see you do! and now I recollect, I saw you with the fair Phœbe yesterday,

* Warwick asserts, and Lord Clarendon hints, what our Cavalier here states; Lord Falkland seems to have been as unhappy in private as in public life. From the day of Newbury to that of Waterloo, there have probably been few battles without some selfish Decius.

in very confidential intercourse. Well! never blush for it, at least not to me. Phœbe is the very damsel to form the love-dream of a young Cavalier, and keep him from all the gross realities that deform so many of our comrades' lives. Right glad am I to find that since she must needs mix in this fold of tainted sheep, there is some one to come between her and that wolf Digby."

I hastened to undeceive my companion, saying: "But you are mistaken, my dear Lord; she you speak of is an old and dear play-mate of mine,—we were children together, but nothing more; and as to Lord Digby, I know nothing of him that deserves such an epithet as you apply to him. I have ever found him a kind and warm friend."

"Ay, ay," resumed Falkland, "fair and false, fair and false. I know him better than you do; but though I like him not, I would scorn to disparage him, if it were not necessary for you, young and inexperienced as you are, to beware of him. I tell you that Digby fancies himself violently in love with

this girl, whom he met in some of his masquerading and mischievous rambles; and more than that, I can tell you that you owe him little for your favour with the King. Not that he wishes any evil to you personally, but he wishes your removal from about the Court; and that with a true courtier's vehemence in small things."

"But," I remonstrated, "if Lord Digby had any designs against me, he would scarcely have interested himself in my favour, in the first instance, with the King."

"Ah," replied Falkland, "fortunately for you, you know little yet of courts and courtiers. He could not keep either your arrival at Nottingham, or your father's generous service secret; but he did his best to render both unacceptable, by representing them as bribes from Lord Hastings to be restored to the royal favour. To this you must attribute the King's cold reception of you at your first interview; although, when his generous nature prevailed over his prejudices, he endeavoured to render justice to your motives."

Astonished as I was by such duplicity on Digby's part, I was too much interested in the former part of Falkland's story to dwell upon what merely related to myself: it seemed to me, moreover, to be the slightest matter in the world to call Lord Digby to account for his conduct; and with this resolution I dismissed the subject from my thoughts, and turned to that in which I felt more interest.

CHAPTER XVI.

Veü muerta, tau escondida.

Come peace, come death ! come silently,
And sound no knell, no warning give,
Lest the sweet bliss of welcoming thee
Should rouse my wearied soul to live.

CANCIONERO DE VALENTA.

“ HAVE you long known the lady of whom you spoke so admiringly just now ?” I inquired, with some hesitation.

“ Unfortunately for me, no,” he replied. “ It was just before the outbreak of this unhappy war that I first beheld her. In those times I vainly hoped that all our differences might be composed by mutual sacrifices and mutual confidence on the part of the royal and popular advisers. With this view I frequented

the society of the latter. It was at one of their meetings that I learned the cruel persecution to which an able and upright minister had been subjected by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The person I speak of had been a brave and devoted officer of the King's. At the luckless siege of Rochelle, he had been wounded and taken prisoner by the French; and there, in his imprisonment, solitude and suffering wrought in him somewhat the same sort of change that Ignatius Loyala had experienced. His life had previously exhibited the thoughtless and sensual character too common amongst our young officers; but when his earthly view became bounded by the narrow and dreary precincts of a prison hospital, his active and inquiring spirit soared away, and sought refuge in the invisible world beyond. Already secretly impressed, (though as an enemy to it), by the darkly enthusiastic system of the Puritans, he now exercised his thoughts upon that system. In a word, he became, like Saul, a convert to the principles he had persecuted. He escaped from prison, made his way to England, and, after some strange adventures which I know not,

entered into the Church. His asceticism and his eloquence at first obtained for him considerable license for his non-conforming habits, but his vehement nature soon became altogether impatient of the cold, official forms so sternly insisted on by Laud. He was accordingly cited before the Ecclesiastical Courts; he made some submission or composition, which satisfied the churchmen for the time; and he returned to his poor curacy, then the only means of support for himself and an infirm mother. But he became more ardent in his obnoxious views as the flames of dissent were spread abroad through England; or else the Church became more exacting. At length, it required of him such concessions as he could not or would not make. Without further process, he was superseded, suddenly, in the midst of winter, flung abroad upon the world, penniless, and what was far worse to him, forbidden to preach, under pain of banishment. His mother died of the hardships attendant on the change, and their ejection at that inclement season; and so it seemed to him,

that she was murdered by the Church. He was left alone in the world.

“ Such, at least, was the case which I heard stated, and in which I naturally interested myself. Pym, who narrated it, amplified the story, and added a thousand touching incidents, skilfully striking all the sympathies which his marvellous knowledge of human nature enables him to play upon so successfully. I ought to have been more upon my guard against statements coming from such a quarter: but when he ceased to speak, I heard a gentle sigh, and for the first time, I observed that a young girl of exquisite grace and beauty had been a listener as well as I. Her eyes sought mine, as if to see what effect the tale had produced on others. Such eyes! so soul-possessed, so full of a spiritual light, that shone all the brighter through the unconscious tears that filled them. It seemed to me, as if the very angel of pity stood by, to champion with her gentle power the wronged victim whose fate had already powerfully interested me. I always told Hyde that I never was intended by nature for a states-

man : as the Persians say, I carry my judgment in my heart and not in my head. Accordingly, I vowed to the Puritans to take their part. I pledged myself that very night, in the House of Parliament, to call the prelates to account, and you know I kept my word. I was rewarded for my impetuous and perhaps rash declaration, by a look of approval from the fair listener, and that look haunts me still. I sought her acquaintance ; I found in her a perfect sympathy with every better impulse of my nature, whilst every narrow or sectarian feeling seemed, like bats, to shrink from the clear sunshine of her presence.

“ Wrapped in one of those trances of thought that so often blind men to their actual position, I continued my intercourse with the demagogues, as I must now call them, and with my beautiful instructress. With respect to this outlawed churchman, I could not myself offer him an asylum without offence to the King ; but the lady I spoke of informed me one day that a place was ready for him at her father’s house, and required only my application for it, in order to

account for its bestowal. The affair was arranged, and the churchman, converted by persecution into a better Puritan, became chaplain to a wavering royalist."

During this explanation, I was several times on the point of interrupting Lord Falkland, and returning his confidence in a manner that his words had rendered very painful and difficult. I determined, ultimately, to ask him one question, the purport of which may be easily guessed, and to be guided in my explanations by his reply.

"No! by Heaven, Hastings!" he exclaimed, "she never gave me the slightest encouragement; and if you had known her, you never would have asked the question. She would not know what encouragement meant, indeed—no more than if she were already in that world where there is no marrying, or giving in marriage: nought but the most perfect purity could produce that modest fearlessness and engaging confidence that so charmed me. But why I dwell on such a subject, I scarcely know. To me she must ever remain an object of admira-

tion, as unapproachable, if as radiant as a star. Ah! wearily life flows on in absence of all hope for ourselves or others on this side the tomb. Eternal war, and strife, and struggle, within and without; in our country, in our court, in ourselves! The destiny of man seems like that of the lesser creatures, who are only born to devour and be devoured. Peace! Peace! Where could that blessed word have originated, save in Eden or the poet's imagination. Peace! Peace! her presence is not to be sought in palaces, or the cushioned halls of luxury, or even within cloistered walls;—the grave—the grave alone is her asylum!”

I had listened, in silent astonishment, to this long confession from one usually so restrained and cautious as Lord Falkland; and I could only account for his unexpected confidence, by believing that his sensitive nature, once having burst the bounds of its usual reserve, overflowed in despite of himself. For my part, I felt such embarrassment, that I endeavoured only by silence to shew my sympathy with the speaker.

Since then, this gifted and eccentric man has

found the rest he sought, and, I trust, the peace he longed for: England is still writhing under the sufferings he bewailed; and she whom he associated with the cause of his despair, is still as great a mystery as ever.

As our conversation ceased, we entered the gates of Oxford, and then followed various military duties, and the usual contest for quarters, provisions for men, and assistance for our wounded. It was therefore late before I had an opportunity of seeking Hugo, who had been prevented from joining our expedition by his attendance on the King.

My disappointment was great when I found that he had been dispatched to Stratford-upon-Avon, to make arrangements for the reception and supplies of a large detachment of Royal Horse, about to march northwards in a few days. As I was changing my dress, I found that a wound, which I had scarcely noticed, began to feel painful. On being examined, it proved rather serious, and kept me confined to my bed for some days. In that busy time, when a man was out of sight, he was soon forgotten or sup-

posed to be absent, and Blount strictly fulfilled the surgeon's injunctions to keep me quiet, by excluding every visitor. The first who obtained, or perhaps sought for, admittance to me was Prince Rupert. He saluted me with rough kindness, and told me I was quite well, or must be so by the morrow.

“ I march to-morrow for the North,” said he, “ and I would not be so ungrateful as to leave you here, consuming in idle safety. We shall move at first by easy stages, for to say truth, I shall have half a hospital on horseback ; trusting to air and exercise to put them in fighting trim before we reach Birmingham. Your brother Hugo and Dallison are gone on to prepare for us, and, in short, you see you must be well, and send your surgeon to the right about. You lose nothing in leaving this fiddling and chattering town just now, for the women have all got the chicken pox, or the goal fever, or some such matter, and are become invisible. My surgeons are busier in attending fine ladies than good soldiers.”

I followed the Prince's advice; I called for meat and wine, declared myself well, and almost drove Blount into a state of mutiny by going out to walk. The next morning I was in the saddle betimes, with many another Cavalier as ill or worse than I was, and we marched away for the North. Thus I was again compelled to leave Oxford without again seeing Phœbe.

Bryan, now considerably grown in stature and importance, rode by my side; supporting me when I felt faint, cheering me when I was most depressed, and amusing me with an inexhaustible supply of private anecdotes that he had picked up amongst his gossips at the Court. As the Prince prophesied, I rapidly recovered on the road. When we reached Birmingham, I was still so weak as to be only a spectator of its capture; but at Lichfield I was able to serve once more, which I did the better, as I had my gallant cousin Hotspur for a comrade. After the siege and recovery of this good town, our flying army was recalled to Oxford by pressing despatches from the King. We left Lathom

House and York unrelieved, therefore; and returned, reluctantly, to our old quarters at the University.

The very evening of our arrival, my brother and I went to visit Phœbe; Hugo proved the change that a year had wrought in his youthful sensations by a nervousness till then unknown to him. We found her in the apartment she had mentioned, in Merton College. When we entered, she was sitting in a window's deep recess, and Lady d'Aubigny sat, or rather lay, upon a cushion at her feet. They formed a picturesque group, strongly defined by the light of lamps within, and a bright moon without, each making strong shadows, as their pale and red rays gleamed over cheeks, and hair, and gracefully draped forms.

Lady d'Aubigny welcomed my brother with a languid smile of triumph as if reclaiming a lost truant; but suddenly her countenance changed, and her eyes flashed fire, as Hugo passed her with a deep but distant salutation, while he grasped Phœbe's proffered hand with

timid eagerness; he seemed to have forgotten that Lady d'Aubigny was in the world. The latter soon recovered herself, and entered eagerly into conversation with me; asking various questions relating to our late campaign, which showed that she was well informed concerning its operations.

Meanwhile Hugo had lost all thought of everybody and everything in the presence of his beautiful Phœbe. She seemed to me to have improved in the dangerous art of coquetry, and to be amused rather than touched by his romantic admiration. Just then Lord Digby entered the room, and without ceremony took all the conversation in it on himself.

I was not in a mood to appreciate his gift at that moment, but I was compelled to admire the inimitable dexterity and brilliance of his discourse. Without the least approach to dogmatism or patronising airs, he seemed to exercise some undefined species of authority and winning influence over his hearers; one by one admitting each into partnership with

his best thoughts and happiest conceits; so that, instead of a rival, he made each listener self-interested in the prosperity of his jest. For Lady d'Aubigny he had some tale of a political intrigue, whose dramatis personæ were made to amuse all the company, whilst its purport was confidentially dropped into her private ear. To Hugo he told, in most touching terms, the sad story of the gallant young Fielding's unhappy failure and his doom. Even for me, on whose brow he saw a cloud lowering, he endeavoured to frame a palatable eulogy for the late affair at Lichfield; but finding me ungraciously disposed, he turned haughtily away and addressed himself to Phœbe. Then I became more deeply interested, and argued ill from the very fact of his postponing his address to her as to the least doubtful hearer in the room.

What a change took place in his manner as he approached her! Instead of the bold and almost exulting confidence with which he had tempered his communication to others, he at

once assumed an air of timid and deferential, yet most honest seeming, in addressing her. The scoff and the jest were laid aside as weapons that he had no longer use for, and a frank simplicity took their place. I could not help cursing him in my heart, as Phœbe turned her beautiful eyes towards him, beaming with too much of the confidence he so dangerously sought. In a few minutes the once frank-hearted girl and her insidious admirer were engaged and absorbed in deep, low conversation, while Hugo—the generous, the noble, and the true, stood alone and neglected in the centre of the room. He seemed to feel some annoyance, but nothing more; so entire and trusting was his faith in the playfellow of his childhood, that suspicion, or its grim avenger, jealousy, never occurred to his mind. He remained, however, restless and embarrassed, as if waiting for the end.

Meanwhile the Lady d'Aubigny watched the whole scene with eager and delighted eyes; and when at length her gaze met Hugo's glance,

she rivetted it by a look—full of fatal meaning—towards the recess. There leant Phœbe, with eyes averted indeed from the eloquent Digby, but listening and glistening, and brighter for the reflection of the raised colour of her cheek. Digby seemed to hover over her; the points of his lace collar sometimes actually touched her sleeve, and she trembled slightly, but moved not from where she stood. At length my eyes ventured to meet Hugo's: his cheek, a short time before, wore the warm hue of sanguine youth and purest health, whilst his high forehead was of marble whiteness. Now that forehead was dark with its first flush of shame and ire, and his cheeks were ashy pale.

He almost rudely flung away the hand of Lady d'Aubigny that rested on his sleeve, and strode towards the door. I followed him; I told him at once what I feared he felt, but added that I knew Lord Digby had some confidence with Phœbe, who had nevertheless warned us against him.

“So you see,” I added, “this scene,—which I grant you seemed strange, is a mere matter of business. However, you will perhaps like to be by yourself, and I must return; for I, too, have some business with this Lord.”

With a struggle between hope and sadness, Hugo grasped my hand and passed out; I returned to Lady d’Aubigny’s apartment.

Phoebe had left the window and was looking pensive; Digby was conversing gaily with the widow. I drew near the former, and observed to her in a low voice that I presumed she had found a warning she once gave me was unnecessary in her own case.

“Oh!” she exclaimed, with glistening eyes, “you cannot conceive how I have wronged him.—I now know him to be generous and true-hearted, as formerly I believed him to be false.”

I looked at her steadily, and the blood mounted to her delicate cheek.

“Lady,” said I, “I know that to return your warning against this bold, bad man, will

be as vain as it is necessary ; I can only deplore the blindness of one, whom I have known so long and regarded so tenderly.”

Digby, whose quick ear nothing escaped, now finished some jest to Lady d'Aubigny, and joined us with the remark : “ Our affairs must be even as deplorable as Falkland would represent them, if this redoubtable Cavalier finds aught to deplore in such a presence.”

“ I was deploring falsehood and treachery,” I replied, “ which unfortunately may force their way into the presence, if not into the favour, of purity itself.”

“ Too true,” returned Digby, with mock sentiment, “ even as the Father of lies obtained admission into truthful Eden. But dare I inquire to what your aphorism refers ? Or perhaps”—he added, in a lower voice— “ I had better postpone the inquiry to a future opportunity.”

After a few common-place remarks, in which no trace whatever of disturbance appeared in his voice or countenance, Lord Digby took his leave, and I almost immediately followed him.

Phœbe seemed rather uneasy than alarmed, and Lady d'Aubigny was too much occupied with her own thoughts to take much notice of others.

CHAPTER XV.

Or gli animosi a ritrovar si vanne,
 Con senno i passi dispensando, ed arte
 Ecco si vede incominciar l'assalto,
 Sonar il ferro, or girar basso, or alto.

Era a parar, più ch' a ferire, intento,
 E non sapea egli stesso il suo desire.
 Spegner Rinaldo saría mal contento ;
 Nè vorría volentieri egli morire.—ARIOSTO.

“WELL! my Lord,” exclaimed Digby, as we met in the court-yard below, “there is need of few words between us:—I accept the challenge which your manner gave just now, and I should spare you the trouble of further words upon the subject, but that I would fain know to what I am to refer the honour of crossing swords with so distinguished a personage?”

Strange to say, I was rather at a loss to reply to this very natural question. I had indigna-

tion enough to quarrel with a host of Digbys, but a formal reason for doing so was not so easy to assign. My sole impulse had been to take the quarrel out of Hugo's hands. He, at least, had no valid reason to assign for what I well knew was inevitable. *I* had suffered the more palpable injury of treachery, but I had not known how far Lord Falkland had spoken under an implied confidence.

At length I replied: "Permit me too, to ask you one question, to which your reply will furnish an answer to your own. When I had the honour of escorting your Lordship to Nottingham, did your report concerning me to the King agree with the professions you were pleased to make to me on that occasion?"

"Enough," said Digby, colouring slightly, notwithstanding his self-possession; "enough,—you have lent an ear to the usual calumnies against me, and that is sufficient to make me the challenger."

"For that, at least, I have to thank you," I replied hastily. "The King may excuse in your Lordship's case—what would doubtless incapacitate me from ever having the honour of

servicing him, as my father proved in the case of a former favourite."

Lord Digby was silent for a moment—perhaps the remembrance of his having informed me of this fact,—perhaps some impulse of generous feeling influenced him. When he spoke again, it was without any remains of his former haughty manner.

"I know not how it is," said he, "or what busy devil perverts all my intentions. I know that I intended to have deserved and, if possible, to have gained your friendship, but some other pressing matter prevented me from immediately taking the best steps to secure that end. However, that matters not now. No man shall ever say that George Digby shrank from a challenge, or permitted an insult to pass unavenged. You have but to name the time and place."

"This moment, if it please you," said I, anxious to prevent Hugo from having time to meet with my antagonist.

"Nay, nay," said Digby, carelessly, "you are too good a swordsman for me to meet, without

first settling my affairs; and I have lived too long and busily not to have many such affairs to settle. This evening, if you will, I shall attend you at Bagley Wood, at sundown. One word more: the King's orders against the duello are strict; let this appear to be a chance quarrel and encounter, and let us have no third person present."

This matter being arranged, Lord Digby repaired to Christchurch to amuse the King, and to plot new schemes for the mere sake of plotting. I hastened to Prince Rupert; for I remembered well how my father suffered life-long disgrace for such an act as I was now about to commit.

I found his Highness walking up and down his small apartment very rapidly; his hat was flung upon one chair, his scarlet cloak upon another, and his sword lay upon the table which was strewn with papers. His right hand was thrust into the breast of his doublet, and with the left he was gesticulating violently, whilst he dictated to his secretary Bennet what I conceived to be a letter.

“ Welcome !” he exclaimed to me, as I entered ; then turning to his secretary, he continued his dictation thus :—“ ‘ And I openly dare the most valiant and quick-sighted of that false faction to name the time, the person, or the house, where any child or woman lost so much as a hair of their heads by me or any of our soldiers.’*—There, Benett, that will do for the present.—Now, Hastings, what’s your business? never mind your apologies ; I was only inditing a rejoinder to those black-hearted knaves, the Puritan bravoës of the pen, who have been long striving to assassinate my reputation. I prefer arguing with them at the sword’s point ; but this paper bullet may reach the white-livered scribes, who never budge beyond their ambusca-does at the writing-desk.”

In a few words I told him frankly my position, adding, “ I dare not officially ask your Highness’s leave to fight, but I am sure you

* This very passage may now be read in Prince Rupert’s “ Declaration,” in the British Museum. The Cavalier’s memory was true almost to the letter.

will pardon me, when I tell you all the circumstances attending my challenge.”

“By St. George,” exclaimed the Prince, “I am only sorry that I cannot take your place against that impostor Digby, nor even be your second. No, I must know nothing about the business; but I’ll see you safe through its consequences, notwithstanding our royal uncle hath, in his clemency, forbade all duello,—a thing impossible!”

Encouraged by the Prince’s manner, I proceeded boldly to ask him to send Hugo out of the way instantly. His Highness has kind and even gentle feelings concealed beneath his stern manner, as his heart beats warmly under his cold iron harness: he has a kindly feeling, especially for that fraternal affection, which I did not scruple to confess to him. I told him that Hugo and I were alone in the world; that the love of a household was for me concentrated in that one brother whom I now sought to save. My request was favourably heard for the sake of Prince Maurice; his Highness’s only comment on it, however, was a loud call, which

was answered by a tall, eagle-eyed Cavalier; a personage of doubtful origin, but unquestionable courage and activity, well known to us all as Rupert's Mercury.

"How fares Captain Dallison to-day?" inquired the Prince of this individual, concerning an officer who had been wounded the day previously, in fighting his way to Oxford with a newly-raised squadron of horse.

"The Captain is pretty well, your Highness," replied the officer; "but for his arm, that's twisted almost out of him; and he's somewhat disturbed by the fever, which taking sack instead of soporifics seems to produce."

"Well," said the Prince, "he is scarcely fit for duty under those circumstances; but his rustic troopers must be tamed by service, for I find they are playing the devil in the town. Go get them into the saddle, and find out Sir Hugo Hastings instantly, to take them towards Reading, whither I have a message for the Lord General. You may tell him it is a service of moment."

The officer disappeared at the last word of

the young General's orders: I did not importune his Highness with my thanks, but retired, making a simple acknowledgment of his kindness.

I hastened to my quarters which consisted of two small dark rooms in High street. They seemed darker than usual. Blount looked dismal even to grimness, though I allowed him the indulgence of announcing a long list of casualties consequent on our late forced march. His humour seemed to suit me, and I let him talk on whilst I was changing my dress for one better adapted to the approaching strife. At length I directed him to seek out and accompany my brother Hugo on his expedition, and when freed from his presence, I proceeded to settle some few affairs; on reflection, however, I decided only to write to Zillah. I was anxious that if I fell, my encounter with Digby should appear a casual one to Hugo; and as all that I possessed would naturally revert to him, I had no legal arrangements to execute. My faithful followers, Bryan and old Blount, would I

knew, be well cared for without my directions, so that I had only my private feelings to consult.

I will not say that I had a presentiment that I should fall; but knowing Digby's skill as a swordsman and unscrupulous disposition, I felt that it was not unlikely. It was only the previous week that Sir Frederick Aunion had fallen in a similar affair, which had produced the King's rigorous denunciation of all future duels; therefore, conqueror or conquered, I had as little that was pleasant to look forward to—as a duellist deserves. So I *now* think. I *then* prepared for the transaction as I should have done for any other indispensable business or military duty.

Assuming a hawking dress, with my usual rapier as my only weapon, I sallied forth to the place of rendezvous. I left my letter for Zillah concealed, so as to avoid all present observation; it ran thus:—

“ Zillah,—I should not presume thus to address you for the first time, if it were not

also to be the last. The hand that traces these few lines will be cold in death before they reach you; the voice that ventures to complain will be silenced. How entirely your being influenced and possessed mine, I now feel more than ever;—now when, at the approach of death, you are the only person on the earth to whom I address one parting word. And even to you I write, not for the sake of the dead but of the living; to spare you future sorrow, and, perhaps, to save others from yet greater grief. In this hope I must inform you of circumstances, which from you of all others, I should have otherwise kept secret.

“Your sister is here, as you are aware; but you are *not* aware that she is in the most dangerous of all society, where all the vices of a camp are combined with all the fascinations of a Court. You have heard of Lord Digby: he has openly professed himself an admirer of your sister’s; and admiration, such as his, I need not tell even you, is a scandal, not an honour. In a word, he and

my brother met this morning in your sister's presence. Lord Digby then received so marked a preference that Hugo retired in sorrow and despair. I feared the consequences for him, procured his immediate dispatch upon military business, and during his absence became involved in a quarrel with one whom I must now call his rival. As you will only receive this letter in case that quarrel should have a fatal result, I thus write to you without reserve.

“Your own judgment will dictate to you what is best to be done with respect to your sister. If I should fall, Digby will probably have to fly; but the King is more than merciful to those whom he loves, and doubtless this dangerous courtier will soon be recalled. If your sister remain at Oxford, he will then be more dangerous than ever to her peace, as she will have suffered anxiety and pain on his account. Young and beautiful as she is, she has no adviser or protectress here who deserves the name. One word more; I should not presume thus to interfere in such a matter

but for the fraternal feeling with which I have always regarded her—the pain that her sorrow would cause to you, and the knowledge that my memory will be secure in your generous keeping from all unworthy imputations.

“Now, Zillah, farewell! With you is associated all that my young life has ever known of happiness and hope. You first taught me to aspire to a life of purity—and to feel the degradation of a mere life of pleasure. Through the bright medium of your mind, I felt how beautiful was the world that seemed unmeaning to other men. In your sweet keeping were concentrated all the stray desires and thoughts of love that ever haunt young hearts for good or ill. Even my resolution wore your form, and if in this most miserable war I have won some honour—the praise be yours;—yours, though gained upon the party you espouse.

“My life, and love, and hope have hung upon you; if my reward has been a disappointed life and early grave, I will not blame you as the cause. Whatever has been your conduct, your

motives are still to me unimpeachable, and doubtless worthy of yourself. I will not utter one complaint; reproach would be ungenerous when you can never reply to it. But my hour is come, and I must say, farewell! in the fervent hope and humble trust, to meet you in a world of truth, whence all concealment is for ever banished.”

* * * *

I only left a message for my brother, and some orders for Bryan, as if I expected to return soon. I was resolved to do so, if alive, and to meet my trial, whatever the penalty might be; and I determined not to take Digby's life under any circumstances.

Sustained by this resolution, and by the indifference to death that long familiarity with danger had taught me, I rode away almost cheerfully to the place of meeting. It was a secluded little meadow, enclosed on three sides by a thicket, on the fourth by a high hedge. As I pushed aside the branches, to force an entrance through the hedge, the scene of action stood revealed, and there I found Digby, thoughtfully leaning on his sword.

On seeing me, he made a grave salutation, and proceeded to loose the points of his cloak with the utmost indifference. When he flung it from him and stood up to his full height, I could not help admiring, not only the symmetry and beauty of his person, but the calm, unostentatious courage that shined steadily in his eyes. No trace of anger, or even of a stern purpose, was there ; his better genius seemed to inspire him, and he looked the model of a soldier and a gentleman.

It was on a soft and pleasant evening that we stood there, Digby and I, face to face—to fight, as each believed, till one of us should die. The earth that we trod upon looked bright and hopeful with all the flowers and young grass of spring. The sky that arched us over was calm, and glowing with all heavenly tints. Birds, bold in their happiness, sang over our heads till scared away by the flash of our swords, now drawn at the same moment, and chasing away all thought but that of how to dim their shining ! Often have I thought since of the strange contrast between the calm of all with-

out, even to our own features, and the strife within—the invisible anger that urged us on to that most fell and unnatural of all fights, a duel.

Since then, I have learned to perceive the greatness of my crime; but then, I was so unconscious of any guilt, that before I crossed swords with my enemy, I knelt upon one knee, and offered up a brief and humble prayer. Digby made no such sign, but he turned aside, perhaps in courtesy. We then addressed ourselves to our task.

On measuring weapons, Digby's appeared to be half a foot longer than mine. He placed it under his foot, to break off the point; the grass, however, was soft, the steel was strong, and it would not break. I interrupted his further attempt, by saying, that I considered the shortness of my sword as an advantage.

“Be it so!” he said, as he advanced; and the next moment we were engaged.

My antagonist was an accomplished swordsman, and had all the advantages of perfect

coolness and consummate courage ; but I soon ascertained that he was no match for me, whose chosen exercise and amusement fencing had been from my youth. It was evident to me, however, that Digby was only playing, and was, at all events, anxious to avoid making a fatal point. More than once, his sword scratched my doublet sleeve ; but we both warmed in the exciting game, and at last I received and turned his blade so as to wrench it from his hand, and send it high into the air. Notwithstanding his anger at being thus foiled, it was evident that he wished to make my refusal to take advantage of his discomfiture an excuse for putting an end to the quarrel. This would by no means have suited my views ; I told him, tauntingly, to take up his sword, and to prove his hand less false than his assertions.

My words wrought a sudden change. I saw a different man before me : his eyes flashing ; his teeth set, and his whole frame as if in act to spring upon me. His attack was fierce and well nigh fatal, for whilst I sought for an opportunity to wound his sword-

arm, he rushed blindly on and passed his sword into my side, so that I could only have defended myself by running him through the throat: his point merely grazed my flesh, however, and as he drew it out to repeat the thrust, I flung him from me with a strength he little expected. At that moment the branches of the hedge crashed, and a well-mounted horseman plunged through them into the little field where we stood.

“Away, away!” he cried; “upon your lives or liberties away! The King has learned your purpose, and a troop of horse is after you. Never was he known so angry; he swears to make an example of you both—if the offender were his own son. He knows of this grave Cavalier,” he continued, pointing to me; “but for you, my Lord Digby, you are supposed to be unknown, and may escape if you can only reach Oxford by another route; as for you, my gentle cousin, you must be off without delay.”

It was Harry Hotspur, who had come, as

he thought, to rescue me. I thanked him for his good intentions, but professed my determination to finish the affair I had come upon—adding that I had far more to fear from the royal anger than Lord Digby had.

“’Fore George!” exclaimed Hastings, “it were a pity to break off what you seem so earnest of. Lumsden’s horse, however, are at hand to arrest you, and I must try to mislead them. If I succeed, I will return incontinently to make my compliments to the survivor.”

So saying, he put his horse again at the thick fence, and disappeared as suddenly as he had entered.

And now we recommenced our attack in a different spirit from before: each more cautious of his antagonist, and more resolved to bring the matter to a quick decision. I afforded my enemy what he thought was an opportunity to pass within my guard, but as he lunged forward, he found his arm impaled upon my sword. He shrank, and involuntarily quivered for a moment with the

pain ; then, drawing himself up, he remained motionless, perhaps expecting my next and fatal thrust. When I restored to him his sword, with some cold compliment on the manner in which he had used it, he smiled, and frankly extended to me his unwounded hand.

“ I offer you,” said he, “ all that you have left me, in frank and cordial pledge that you shall henceforth find me your true friend ; and, lo ! here is our Hotspur for my witness.”

My cousin reappeared through the hedge, in high glee at having sent our pursuers on the wrong scent, and he was still more pleased with the issue of the fight. To say the truth, though brave, and generous, and truthful himself, he was a warm friend of Digby's, and looked upon his faults with a very lenient eye.

With some difficulty we made a sling for the wounded arm and got the sufferer on his horse : then, in defiance of my cousin's advice, we rode deliberately towards Oxford, and found

ourselves under arrest as soon as we entered the gates. Digby's wound was severe, and confined him to his bed: this was all that I desired, and I accordingly submitted to my own imprisonment with resignation.

CHAPTER XVI.

I have a man's mind but a woman's might ;
How hard it is for women to keep counsel.

SHAKSPERE.

One day he came before the king,
And kneeled low on his knee—
A boon, a boon, my good uncle,
I crave to ask of thee.—AULD MAITLAND.

BY the Prince's favour I was a prisoner in my own apartments, and my first care was to look for my letter to Zillah, and to burn it. It was gone! A white flag to Essex, on occasion of an exchange of prisoners, had afforded an opportunity for sending letters to London, and this was as eagerly seized on by the garrison at Oxford as by mariners at sea who find a homeward-bound ship. Bryan had come to seek for letters, and having, with

unlucky ingenuity, discovered that to Zillah, he had despatched it.

It was mortifying and provoking in the highest degree, nay, grievously absurd, this false announcing of one's own death. But there was no help for it; the privileged messenger had gone out in hot haste, and the outposts of the enemy were at this period within a few miles of Oxford.

As I was meditating on this unpleasant subject, I heard a loud step upon the stair, and without a knock, Prince Rupert entered, and greeted me with his usual blunt, manly kindness :

“ Well done,” he exclaimed, “ well done, I say, and again, well done ! You have given Digby a lesson, and what is better, you have put him out of the way for some time to come ; so that honest men will have some chance of being listened to. Now up, man, and come away to the King ; 'fore George, he is in a royal passion, and it is quite a pleasure to see him chafed for once.”

“ With your Highness's good leave,” said I,

“his Majesty’s anger is by no means a source of amusement to me, and I will beg to postpone the honour you propose to me till to-morrow.”

“What ho, there!” cried the Prince, good-humouredly; “you guards, conduct the prisoner to the King.”

Two harquebusiers now presented themselves, whom I was fain to follow as directed. The Prince took my arm as we walked along, and talked merrily of the approaching interview. When we entered Christchurch, however, he resigned me to the guards, and preceded me into the Great Hall, where the King was at supper.

I and my guards soon became so mingled with the groups of officers at the lower end of that large apartment, that we remained unnoticed. I could see Prince Rupert, however, and even hear his voice, which was never subdued to a courtly tone, except when addressed to woman’s ear.

The King’s table, however, was brightened on this occasion by the presence of some ladies,

as well as other guests. Lady Isabella Thynne sat on his left hand, and the Duchess of Richmond on his right, and by her Grace's side was a vacant place, which Prince Rupert took, after a formal salutation to the other ladies, and some familiar nods of recognition to their Cavaliers. I watched every circumstance closely, and somewhat anxiously, for it was not unlikely that the future fortunes of my life were then at issue.

The King looked more grave than usual, and his manner seemed to impress all those at table with him, except the Prince, who was in the highest spirits, and talked and laughed loudly. For some time the conversation related, I believe, to a skirmish that had taken place in the morning: then it seemed to me that my case, and presence too, were mentioned, for the King turned a dark and momentary glance to where I stood, and Prince Rupert spoke out, regardless of all impressions but his own.

“’Tis a pity,” he exclaimed, “that my Lord Digby could not better observe your Majesty’s commands against duellin ; for I

want officers badly, and this afternoon's little tourney seems likely to cost us the services of two more. One could have thought that there was fighting enough in public, without these private recreations to help it; but i'faith, I believe the passion, like most others, grows upon one by indulgence."

The King made some austere reply, in which he appeared to attribute the blame to me, instead of to the quarter on which the Prince had laid it; for the latter promptly replied that "Lord Digby, being the senior, and so much in his Majesty's confidence, was at least the more responsible."

"At all events," continued the Prince, "here is Hastings to answer for himself. I took it upon me to bring him into the presence at once; for, sooth to say, with Essex at the gates, I cannot well spare one of my best officers, nor his good troop, which, by the bye, has never received a shilling of pay from the royal treasury. I know not the moment the trumpets may sound 'to horse;' wherefore, I pray you, my honoured uncle, dispose of this case at

once, and forgive, or banish, or hang this Hastings out of the way incontinently.”

Without waiting for a reply, the Prince motioned to my guards to advance, and in a few moments I stood before the King; without any trepidation, certainly, but I hope also without any approach to effrontery. In fact, I had little to hope, and fear has never been my failing. I was sorry for the King's displeasure, but I had not yet learned to deplore the cause of it: I was well content to serve his Majesty as long as his standard stood, but I should not have much regretted a temporary suspension from that privilege.

The King regarded me for a moment with a countenance that was rather mournful than stern, and though my eyes were cast down, I could feel that his glance then wandered almost nervously away. After a few minutes' awkward pause he broke silence thus:

“Lord Hastings, I could well have wished for a more solemn occasion, in which to judge you for the great crime you stand accused of. Nevertheless, as our nephew's zeal for our service

hath hastened your trial thus, I will at once put to you the question on which our decision must depend. We are informed that you have this day engaged in the blood-thirsty and most unchristian act of duelling, contrary to our express commands, as well as to the law of God. Are you guilty, or not guilty, of this offence?"

The King was silent, and my self-possession was sorely shaken by the manner in which my accusation had been made; and at the same time my attention was also disturbed by the appearance of a stir at the door, as if some one was endeavouring to force an entrance. The King appeared as if a weight was taken off his mind when he had spoken, and his eyes now rested calmly on mine, waiting my reply.

At length I spoke; I confessed that it was true I had had an encounter with one of his Majesty's officers; but I denied that I had acted in a blood-thirsty—and I trusted, not in an unchristian—spirit in so doing.

The King now rose in his chair, and of

course his example was followed by all the company. "Lord Hastings," said his Majesty, "I grieve that you should have placed yourself in a situation to require so indifferent an excuse. I grieve that you should have incurred the punishment, which in justice to the souls, as well as to the bodies of other men, I dare not remit. If you desire it, you shall be tried of this matter by a council of your peers; but this I tell you, that if they find you guilty, you must surely die; yes, for your offence is death, by the Articles of War that we have ourselves promulgated. I would rather, in consideration of your own and of your father's good service, bid you depart this realm and remain beyond seas for the period of your natural life."

This sentence took me completely by surprise. But while my pride rose against the judgment, my conscience began to suggest that it was not quite unrighteous. I was therefore about to retire in silence, bowing to the royal will, when Prince Rupert stepped hastily forward, and laying his hand kindly upon my shoulder, exclaimed:

“I ask your Majesty’s pardon, if for a moment I plead the cause of this good Cavalier. You have pronounced sentence upon him as became a just sovereign, now forgive him like a magnanimous King. If I were a lawyer (which God forbid) I could argue that there be very different species of duello—some, I doubt not, deserving all the hard epithets your wisdom applied to this case in question—but there be others that are mere tourneys to settle points of honour, concerning some fair lady’s eyes, or the quality of a retort. You find this brave Lord guilty from his own words, and his own words declare that he had no blood-thirstiness: this, I take it, makes all the difference between the duello, and those passages of arms, in which your Majesty’s own self once took delight and so much excelled. Again,—where be the witnesses against my Lord here? and where is his opponent? He surely did not fight alone, else would his blood-thirstiness be suicide. Again, I say, where be the witnesses—without whom, no man in England is ordinarily condemned.”

The King's mood had gradually been changing during the rapid and energetic utterance of the Prince's friendly speech, and when his Majesty again spoke, it was in a milder tone.

“ Our nephew is right ; you shall have leave to call any witnesses, be they seconds or other (though I should rather call them accomplices), to prove that your object was not a deadly one ; and I promise you, moreover, that such witnesses shall have pardon.”

“ Then here is one,” exclaimed a faint but well-known voice, from the group near the door.

And Digby advanced, or rather tottered forward, supported on Bryan's shoulder. He was carelessly, perhaps hastily, dressed ; and his sword arm was in a sling ; he was very pale from loss of blood and suffering, but his spirit was unsubdued and unchanged. He sank upon one knee as he approached the King.

“ First,” said he, faintly but firmly ; “ first, let me claim for myself, your Majesty's gracious pardon, as just now promised ; and secondly, let me bear witness to this brave Lord, that my

life was this day frequently in his power, and that he spared it. For my own part, much as I deprecate your Majesty's displeasure, I am not now able even to pray for forgiveness. My voice fails; but your royal clemency will let my very silence plead somewhat in favour of a devoted subject."

Here Digby's strength entirely failed, and he swooned.

The King seemed moved. He descended from the dais, and taking his courtier's cold hand in his, attempted to chafe it; then resuming his former attitude, he desired the sufferer to be removed with all tenderness, and the royal surgeon sent for to attend him.

As soon as the stir caused by this incident had subsided, the King turned to me.

"Lord Hastings," said he, "you are pardoned; but it is fit that this day's action should not pass without some notice, in order to make an impression on those in the garrison who might claim your case as a precedent for impunity. Nevertheless, your punishment shall be so slight, that many men might take it for a

reward. The Lady d'Aubigny is about to proceed to London, under an escort hence, with a pass from the rebels through their hosts. You shall command that escort, and accompany the lady during the remainder of her journey."

Having thus spoken, the King turned away to the group of ladies who had stood at a decorous distance, and at the same time, I left the hall in company with Prince Rupert.

The Prince was in high spirits. "Well," said he, "there's a pretty hour's amusement. How well that dog Digby played his part; 'fore George! I could almost have felt for him myself, when he swooned away, only that I observed him wink with one half-closed eye to the Duchess as he fell."

CHAPTER XVII.

Away, away, thou traitor strong !
Out o' my sight thou soon shalt be !
I grantit never a traitor's life,
And now I'll not begin wi' thee.

JOHNIE ARMSTRONG.

I MUST now interrupt the narrative of my personal adventures, in order to describe what was passing round me.

It had long transpired that Lady d'Aubigny was about to leave Oxford, and it was whispered that her expedition to London involved in it some object of a political nature. For a mission of this description she appeared to be peculiarly well adapted ; she seemed to be fearless as an Amazon ; full of resources, of infinite tact, and above all, possessed of a persuasive

beauty, to which, it was said, some of the Puritan leaders were by no means insensible. With these advantages, however, were combined an indiscretion of talking, that rendered her a dangerous accomplice to trust to. In skilful hands, no secret in her keeping was safe. I verily believe she would have told how old she was, if she had no other confidence to bestow.

Our state secrets had, somehow or other, an extraordinary power of exuding; and we, mere soldiers, generally learned the King's intentions for the first time through the enemy's public journals. Through this channel it had lately become known to us that Lady d'Aubigny had applied for a pass from Essex to visit London. This pass had been granted, and her Ladyship's advent was welcomed by her enemies as that of a carrier-pigeon by its owners. The Round-heads wanted some new incident to excite the people. They knew well the contents of Lady d'Aubigny's papers, and they calmly expected their arrival.

Lord Essex, as I have before mentioned,

beleaguered Oxford, and occupied the country for many a mile round. His declared intention was to invest our City of Refuge with his troops, and gradually to contract the circuit occupied by them until he enclosed the King.

In London, all overtures to peace were considered as having failed, and the Roundhead Government exerted themselves with incredible energy and success to prosecute the war. But there were several distinct parties among the Puritans, so various in their views and divided in opinion, that there was always some one in communication with the King. If the royal arms prevailed, there were timid men who sought to conciliate the conqueror; if the Roundheads won a victory, there were those among them who feared too much success for their own party, and sought for a compromise to restrain them. This state of things fed the war, and maintained a constant under-current of intrigue, that alternately damped our energies when successful, and sustained our hopes when we were defeated.

Now, to return to my own story. On de-

scending to the court-yard after my trial, I was noisily welcomed and congratulated by my cousin Hotspur, and many of the wilder Cavaliers; while Carnarvon, Southampton, and others, with whom I more associated, also met me with kind greetings. Thus, in a sort of triumph, I proceeded down the High Street to my lodgings; the Prince still leaning on my arm, and giving me instructions for my expedition to London.

Finally, he desired me to mark the rebel quarters well: "As soon as you return," said he; "I shall beat them up, and show Essex that his strategy is no match for the 'Mad Prince,' as his knaves are pleased to call me. And, hark ye, I have settled with the King that your fair Phœbe is to accompany you, or rather Falkland has arranged that she is to accompany Kate d'Aubigny. This is no place for girls of that sort, and we have ascertained that her old double-tongued father is now at Reading, carrying on this business of Waller's, so that she will be at once at home there."

I thanked the Prince warmly for his intelligence

and thoughtful arrangements, and was about to take my leave, when he held me by the arm, and said in a graver tone :

“ This war, Hastings, is an uncertain game ; and what people call danger is often found where it could least be expected. I am sorry to tell you, that your brother Hugo’s party was attacked, suffered severely, and left many prisoners behind : your brother is among the number. But, cheer up, my friend, he’s scarcely wounded, and I shall soon procure him an exchange if there’s a man among them worth his ransom.”

Without waiting for an answer, the Prince pressed my hand, wished me God speed, and left me.

This news was indeed a severe blow to me, the more so as I had been instrumental in the measure that led to it. I consoled myself however with the reflection, that my brother was probably more safe as a prisoner than under any other circumstance ; especially at the present moment when his wounded spirit would seek every opportunity of danger in order to distract his grief.

On reaching my own apartments, I could scarcely refrain from smiling when I saw old Blount, his doublet rent, his face begrimed with powder, and his left arm tied to his neck, yet still endeavouring to arrange my dress and arms as methodically as if nothing had happened. I had sent him with Hugo's expedition; and from it, after fighting like a tiger, he had been one of the few who had escaped. He told me his story in very few words and with an unaltered tone of voice :

“ Sir Hugo,” he said, “ had too much of the man in him, and those new-raised troopers too little. They were half drunk when we left the town, and rode singing and hollaring like mad, till they were suddenly beset by a few score of Hazlerigg's lobsters. They struck some stout blows too, and Sir Hugo laid about him manful well, till one came behind him and knocked him off his horse. I cut in to help him, but a dozen of the rebels fell on us at once, and carried him off like a sack of wool. I thought it was my business to come back to wait on your honour, and got home as quick as I could

after a little scratching from their long swords, and a scorch from their captain's pistol."

All the time he spoke, the stout old man continued to occupy himself as usual about my harness. When informed that I was to leave Oxford the next morning for London, however, he quickened his movements, and said that he must go to the surgeon, to put him into order for the journey, and stitch up some seams that the Roundheads had made in his old skin. I did not forbid him to accompany me; I knew that denying him would give the faithful old fellow more pain than he could suffer from his wounds: but I afterwards explained to him that the pass was made out for me alone, which rendered his attendance impossible.

Before I went away, I felt that I ought to call on Digby, and proffer him my thanks for his testimony in my behalf. I could not excuse his falseness, but I began to think that it was constitutional, and scarcely intended by him; and now that Phœbe was about to leave Oxford, his conduct was almost a matter of indifference to me. I found him carelessly stretched on a pallet,

in a large room, redolent of the strongest tobacco and the most delicate perfumes; strewn, too, with armour and court-dresses, and pamphlets and papers of all sorts in wonderful confusion; furnishing a not inapt resemblance to the rich, but ill-arranged furniture of the owner's mind. He was pale and languid; the crimson scarf that he usually wore in battle as his badge, now supported his wounded arm as a sling, lending a strong contrast to his white dress and pallid skin.

He welcomed me with a smile, and spoke of the scene acted in the King's presence, as if it had been some masque in which we had played a part together. When I attempted to thank him for his opportune appearance, he stopped me, and declared that it was Bryan who deserved all the credit of it.

"The queer boy came to me," said he, "just as the surgeons were dressing my wounded arm: in a strangely eloquent, but disjointed address, he informed me, that your life, perhaps, was at stake on account of having obliged me, as he was pleased to express it, by

going out with me ; he alluded in very distinct terms, to our journey to Nottingham, and, in short, he bore me off in triumph to the King.—Never thank me for it, however ; I could not have done better for my own interest, and it is always pleasant to amuse the minds of the fair witnesses, before whom our trial was conducted.”

I have dwelt more at length on these passages with Lord Digby than they would seem to merit, were it not for the important part that he has played in our war, and the place that he will fill in history. His character was, as it were, the character of many of our party in one ; remarkable for a combination of all the peculiarities that were shared among so many others. Since that evening, I have seldom seen him ; but I still feel that he is one, who being once connected with our destiny is sure to be entangled with it hereafter.

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The following morning, Lady d'Aubigny with Phœbe and their serving-women, were ready to start at day-break in the King's coach, which was to convey them as far as Reading, whence they were to proceed on horseback. A crowd of young gallants escorted the ladies as far as the first outpost of the rebels, but were then obliged to return to Oxford. Our passes specified the Lady d'Aubigny and another lady, with their female servants, and one attendant gentleman, whose name was left blank, to be filled up by Prince Rupert. These, having been rigidly examined, we were suffered to pass with cold civility, under an escort that vigilantly forbade any communication except amongst ourselves. As the spirits of the party seemed to have vanished with the young Cavaliers, our journey through the deep and miry roads was wearisome enough.

When we reached Reading, I consigned my fair charges to their well-guarded apartments in

the best hostelry the place afforded, and then retired, feeling little inclination to seek society under present circumstances. My first care was to ascertain whether Sir Janus was in the town, and to obtain leave from my guards to seek him. I desired to inform him of one daughter's unexpected arrival; and, need I say, to inquire for another. I met surly answers to most of my inquiries, for my Cavalier garb was not a recommendation in Reading.

At length I was stopped in a narrow passage by a group of officers and divines, who seemed to be issuing from some assembly. I addressed my inquiries to one of the former, who immediately referred to a Puritan minister, engaged in dry and stern argument with another. On hearing his name mentioned, the minister turned abruptly round with a cold stare, which instantly gave way to a look of astonishment, evidently of no pleasurable kind. It was Hezekiah Doom.

When some moments of silence had enabled him to rally his well-trained faculties, with a formal return to my greeting he informed me that I should find Sir Janus in the adjoining house, but that unless my business was very urgent, I could not be received there, as the Baronet was severely indisposed.

I hastened to this house, however, with a beating heart; my knocking was unanswered, so I raised the latch, and entered. An anxious voice inquired hastily who was there; and without reply I entered, and found myself in the presence of Zillah!

Yes! she in whom were centred the whole interest of my world was there, though I saw not her face. It was buried in her hands, and her whole frame was quivering with emotion; she seemed in the very agony of sorrow. With a trembling voice I pronounced her name; she started to her feet with a shrill cry, and gazed wildly on me. Her eyes appeared to dart light,

as they gleamed out from her pale face and all the rich dark tresses that surrounded it; a gush of tears as quickly followed, and she sank upon her knees, clasping in her folded hands a letter—and behold that letter, it was mine!—mine, which I had written as the relation of my death!

With a mingled sense of happiness and shame I clasped those hands, and hurriedly endeavoured to explain why that letter had been written, and how it had arrived. As I spoke, Zillah sent one deep inquiring glance into my very soul, and then cast down her eyes, her long lashes glittering with her tears upon her cheeks: they were no longer pale; a deep colour rushed into them, and mounted to her very forehead as she slowly drew herself up, and folded her hands in cold dignity across her breast.

After a few minutes of silence, she had composed herself, and even stilled the throbbings of

that breast ; she spoke slowly and calmly, but not in her usual voice, as she thus denounced all my happiness, and left me all my shame.

“ Lord Hastings, I will not deny that I rejoice in finding that you are still among the living, nor will I deny that the weak passion of sorrow you have so strangely witnessed was caused by my apprehension of your death. But it was with no earthly fear or grief that I mourned for you ; your having perished in your sin, was the thought that wrung my heart. Had I heard that you had died in fight, doing battle for the people of the Lord, no tear would have escaped me ; but to think that you, the companion, the trusted friend of my earliest youth, had perished in a heathenish brawl, by the hand of one of your own infidel companions, was sore trial to me. For your care of my poor sister, had it been otherwise shown, I could have thanked you ; but to do evil that good might come, is too much in consonance with the popish principles and crooked policy of the party whom you serve.”

The sweet voice of my reprover must have

had wondrous power in softening her stern words; or else the delight I experienced in beholding and hearing her once more, overcame all other thoughts. Woman's anger is far less terrible than her sorrow, especially when you can see through the storm the lights of sunshine struggling with the clouds; and so it was with Zillah, as I thought. And then, her lofty attitude and noble bearing became her so well, that the words, which were in keeping with both, seemed exactly what she ought to utter.

I replied, therefore, deferentially, as became me: yielding up all argument to her beauty and her power, and leaving the party-question out of sight. I then told her that her sister was arrived, and inquired whether Sir Janus would make application for her restoration to freedom, as she was still kept under restraint, together with Lady d'Aubigny.

Gradually, as I spoke, Zillah's manner became subdued into its more usual tenor, and she exclaimed, forgetful of her late emotion, "My poor sister! my poor sister! she must be rescued by all means. But my father is too ill,

or esteems himself to be so, to leave his bed: I must inquire for his chaplain:—would that he were here!”

“He *is* here,” exclaimed the deep voice of Hezekiah, in a tone as if it had burst from him. (I hope I do not wrong him, but I imagine that he dogged my steps since first we met.) “He is here—at hand,” he continued, “—as behoves the shepherd to be, when the wolf is prowling near his fold.”

The indignation that I felt on observing the influence that this dark man seemed to exercise over the woman that I loved, was intense, but the angry words that rose to my lips paused, struggling, there: the saviour of my brother’s life rose before me, and my thoughts only spoke in my eyes. The Puritan understood them, however, and replied by a severe and haughty look, that seemed to dare me. Turning then almost scornfully away, he addressed himself to Zillah, who had re-assumed the calm, rapt air, that was but too well known to me.

“What hath the daughter of Zion in

common with the sons of Belial?" demanded Hezekiah, almost sternly, of his lofty and impassive-looking pupil: "is it seemly that these godly men," pointing to my guards, "should see such as thou conversing at this hour, and thus, with a Malignant and an enemy of thy people?"

The Puritan had evidently been carried away by his feelings beyond the usual boundaries of self-command. It was evident, at all events, that such interference was an unusual assumption on his part, for Zillah gazed on him with a mixture of surprise and proud displeasure. But her nature was too commanding not to be able to command itself—the more so when most stirred.

"Sir," said she, with a calm, quiet air, that was in itself the best reply to Hezekiah's intemperate address; "Sir, there is here no matter for such discourse; I had intended to seek counsel from you concerning my sister, who is treated as a prisoner by our own authorities. This Cav—" she hesitated a moment and corrected herself, "this man of

war has been her escort thus far from the camp of the King, and came to inform me of her arrival."

The Puritan replied hastily, that the lady was already cared for; and then, and without further explanation, he passed into the supposed sick room of Sir Janus. Immediately afterwards, that anxious father called Zillah, who, with a stately, nun-like formality, but yet something of a kindly glance, bowed to me and disappeared into the same room. My guards then reminded me that I must return, and soon afterwards I found myself in my inn.

Lady d'Aubigny's waiting-woman was there, waiting to request me to visit her lady, into whose presence I was straightway ushered.

Handsome as Lady d'Aubigny always was, she never appeared to me so much so as in that evening. The excitement of travel had given light to her eyes and colour to her cheek, while fatigue, though unfelt, had subdued and softened her somewhat too vivid beauty. And yet her magnificent hair, which

I had always been accustomed to see richly adorned, was closely compressed in curl-papers ! A dark veil, however, covered her comely head, and floating back over her shoulders, I suppose did duty to the eye instead of the usual floating tresses.

Lady d'Aubigny never sat upon a chair or bench when she could help it. Lord Carnarvon had easily persuaded her that the attitudes of the East were far more becoming, and she obeyed the suggestions of that traveller and of her own taste. She was now couched upon a carpet, with which she always travelled, in order to keep her delicate feet from the rude floor ; and her white dress was relieved off the dark tapestry with which the walls of the chamber were loosely hung.

She received me very graciously ; tears trembled in her large bright eyes, and her voice, as well as her look, had assumed that sort of timid appeal that makes so dangerous a variety in proud beauty's powers. Her mind appeared to labour for a fit form of expression,

and it was some time before she found words to explain that she feared I had not a very favourable opinion of her.

“Yet,” she added softly, “you are one of the few in the world whose opinion I *could* value.” She concluded by telling me that all her goods were to be searched,* “for those dangerous papers, which they seem to know too well are in my possession. Now let me place full confidence in you—and confess that my heart is beginning to fail me in this matter. Scarcely had we arrived when a rude man entered the room, and sternly desired poor Phœbe to resume her travelling dress, and to make herself as little like Jezabel as possible, as she would be required to give evidence forthwith before the secret committee in London, touching the matter of Ahab.

“You know, perhaps, that the arch-traitor Pym admires her extravagantly, and that may

* We find that the French Ambassadors to the King were, about this time, as rudely searched as the Cavalier describes Lady d’Aubigny to have been.—*Whitelock*, p. 73.

be one reason why she was hurried off to London. Poor child! she knows nothing of our state secrets; and to confess to you the truth, I would fain be back in Oxford, and yield up that dangerous possession to some other. Whilst I was there, buoyant with hope and daring, which I imbibed from the goodly company with which I was surrounded, I thought I could have dared and done anything. But here, in silence and solitude, surrounded by these grim and insolent Roundheads, I feel that I have undertaken more than I had heart for. My soul sickens when I think of the terrible ordeal to be passed through in London when the plot explodes. Waller, too, has failed in his promise to meet me here; and the secret that I bear seems better known to every one around me than to me. Oh! surely, when careering through the battle-field, with banner, and trumpet, and loud guns, you have far less need of nerve than now, where we are mysterious conspirators standing on a mine, round which an enemy scatters sparks, while they seek to throw light upon it."

“Lady,” I replied, “I am no conspirator. I have no knowledge whatever of the scheme in which you have so boldly risked your fair person. I am not one of those who seek to contend in the cause of truth with the weapons of falsehood. I would fain leave such courses to Jesuits and Puritans. Even the honour of being your escort was no choice of mine; that privilege was forced upon me. However, now that your anxiety is only for your safety, I am bound, as a gentleman and a soldier, to defend you with my life.”

“I will not thank you,” said Lady d’Aubigny, “as if I could have doubted of your faith. I will only beseech you to tell me how to act. They may search my wardrobe as they will, they cannot find the papers they seek for. Can we, as if resentful of the injury of being searched, claim safe conduct back to Oxford? I see that the strength of our plot is already gone, though now it lies, like Sampson’s, in my hair.”

Suddenly the tapestry was violently shaken,

and Hezekiah Doom appeared from beneath its folds, exclaiming :

“Dalilah that thou art! thy plot of fear is vain as that of thy false bravery. As a lion lurking in secret places, have I discovered thy dangerous subtlety.”

The minister had not yet recovered from the excitement he had lately yielded to—he advanced almost fiercely towards Lady d’Aubigny to clutch the papers that he had discovered. I stepped forward instinctively to her assistance ; but with a strength that I could not have believed possible, he flung me aside, and before I could recover myself he had seized the papers. The next moment he lay prostrate and bleeding on the floor ; I felled him with my clenched hand, and at the same time Harrison rushed into the room, followed by half a score of men-at-arms. It took less time than I can tell it in, to drag me down stairs, to bind me hand and foot, and to cast me into a dark cell in the castle-dungeon. Lady d’Aubigny was deprived of the papers

which cost so many brave men their lives and fortunes, and which made Waller, the concocter of the plot, as infamous for his meanness as he had been once glorious for his poetry.

CHAPTER XVIII.

To-morrow ! oh that's sudden—
Spare him ! spare him !

THE BIRTLE TRAGEDY.

I LAY in a strange state of reckless discomfort in my cell, yet time did not seem to pass slowly. The novelty of my situation struck me more than its undelightfulness or its danger. Even then, a chained,—and probably—death-sentenced prisoner as I was, I felt pleasure in the thought that I was near Zillah, and in the conviction that if I was to die, I should see her before I passed away. In that thought I fell asleep and dreamed happily, until some wounds I had received from Harrison's eager myrmidons, and

still more, the intolerable pain of the cords with which I had been bound, vengefully tight, awakened me. Then came fever-fits alternately with fainting, and when my prison-door at length opened, I was scarcely able to recognize the persons who entered.

There were two, but only one step sounded on the damp stone floor, so light was the other's tread. Immediately, my cords were cut, and the blood began to circulate in my veins once more. I opened my eyes and found the light of day, streaming into my dungeon, fell upon the two forms I loved and hated most on earth. Zillah was closely wrapped in a cloak, and her eyes filled with that pity which her other features strove sternly to repress.

Hezekiah rose from his labour at my cords, with a visage as unmoved as that of a statue. He cast a cold, keen, inquiring glance upon Zillah's countenance, and then drew back as far as the narrow space of the dungeon would permit. But Zillah seemed unconscious of his presence—of everything. Unable to rise, I could scarcely see her face, but I

believe it was upturned in prayer, for the hood of her cloak fell off, and discovered her head of matchless symmetry, from which the long, dark hair rolled down in rich confusion. The silence was intense: emotion lent energy to my tortured and weakened frame, or rather—torture and weakness were both forgotten, as by some secret sympathy I rose slowly on one knee, and my mind too strove to assume the attitude of prayer. I felt that I was to die; and far worse, I felt that this was to be my last interview with her with whom my life was twined. At length Zillah turned her eyes on me—those wondrous eyes, so full of immortal light and truth!—and then she spoke, in pained, and faint, but firm tones,

“They tell me that thou, soldier as thou art—friend of mine as once thou wert—have been detected in the base and cowardly office of a spy. Nay more, that our godly soldiers, who witnessed thy interview with me, arrested thee unto this prison in a vulgar brawl about a—paramour! But I come to reproach thee with no earthly feeling. They tell me there is but

one fate reserved for a spy. They tell me—thou must—DIE.” I could only see, not hear this little word trembling on my poor love’s pale lips. For a few gasps of breath she paused, and then continued more hurriedly, “I sought and obtained one favour, to see you once more; and if possible, once more to waken in you the pure thoughts of our happy childhood, and prepare you for the higher comfort that some godly minister may, through grace, be permitted to impart.—Oh! do not interrupt me, or the few minutes that remain to us—to me I mean—will be lost. Oh! Reginald! on this dread moment may hang all the hopes of a happy eternity—Forget! blot out from your soul the evil and profligate experiences of the camp, that have so dishonoured your once noble nature. Remember the day when we sat hand in hand, gazing on the sunlit sea, and beholding God visible in everything that was beautiful. Remember the time when the death of heroes seemed to us so glorious, and a shameful death impossible.”

She paused, and shuddered. I thought she

shuddered at my crime ; but no,—for with a piercing cry she fell upon my neck, and bathed my brow, my very soul, with such delicious tears, that I could scarcely bear up against the too exquisite delight. My arms still hung without sensation by my side, yet I could rapturously feel the poor heart that I so adored as it beat against my bosom in its frantic grief. Yet—who will believe it?—by some irrepressible impulse, even at that moment I raised my eyes to where Hezekiah stood, or had stood, for another form seemed to occupy his place : dilated, quivering in every limb, his lurid eyes blazing up into fierce fire ; and yet there was over all such an expression of unutterable woe, that, rapt as I was in the greatest happiness I had ever known, I still could pity him. All this passed with the rapidity of thought, for, with a groan of pain, rather than an exclamation, the Puritan laid a heavy hand on Zillah's shoulder.

“Woman ! woman !” he shouted, yet between his teeth, “must thy miserable sex ever fail ? Wilt thou ever give up Eden for this accursed

fruit? Wilt thou, like Lot's wife, look back from blessedness to gaze on that which is doomed to swift destruction?"

The preacher might have gone on, but he was unheeded. Zillah—the high-souled, proud Zillah—had fainted on the breast of her despised lover; the life-strings, strained so long, seemed snapped. My cuirass was a cold pillow for that delicate cheek, but I could not help her, for my limbs were still powerless. The preacher probably believed that she was dead, for his voice ceased, and his countenance changed into rigid solemnity. He then raised her form gently from its forbidden resting-place, and his hands actually pressed against me while he did so. I sank helplessly on the ground, and Hezekiah bore away Zillah to the window in his arms. I could see the breeze, as it stole through the iron bars, stirring the ringlets on her pale brow; or was it that dark man's breath? Suddenly my veins seemed free; I sprang to my feet; the blood rushed to my brain, and I sank senseless on the ground.

When, through pain and agony, my spirit

once more struggled into consciousness, I found myself in a well-ordered room, attended by a severe-looking, but gentle-handed surgeon. I was sternly desired to be still; I was informed that in the fray of the tapestried chamber I had received some wounds in my head that might prove dangerous, and that nothing but profound quiet could preserve me.

“One word only,” I asked, “how long have I been senseless?”

“Three days,” was the reply. When I next attempted to speak, the surgeon left the room, and I have reason to suppose that his silence was meant for kindness. I could bear suspense no longer, however, and taking advantage of his absence, I dressed hastily as well as I was able, and left the room. There I found two halberdiers, who quietly took me by either arm, and led me—not back to my sick room, but forward to the cell which I had left.

It lay at the far end of a dark gallery. During my brief passage thither I inquired for Zillah, though I almost shrank from naming her.

My guards made no reply; I entered my cell, and the door closing in upon me, I felt as if I were already in the land where all things are forgotten.

Soon afterwards my door was gently opened, and the elder halberdier, who had been my guard, looked in.

“Man of Belial, as thou art,” said he softly, “and though I be ordered to have no speech with thee, nevertheless my heart is troubled for thee, and I will speak. Poor youth, thou art like unto my son, even my first born, whom you servants of the tyrant and the idolater, slew in Keinton fight; and surely thou too shalt die, but not like him, in the goodly heat of righteous battle:—without friend to back, or foe to front, thou shalt be shot to death, dog-like. And for that, inasmuch as thou art a blood-seeking Cavalier, I rejoice; but, inasmuch as thou art formed in God’s image, and art like my son, I would not that such another goodly form were destroyed, or thy voice were put to silence in the grave even as his was.

Speak then, and for his sake I will answer thee, that thy soul may not be all dark."

It seemed hard that I should be thus ever visited with the offences of others; but I was too anxious to feel aught except gratitude towards the rough but kindly soldier. I besought him to tell me what had become of Zillah, and when my fate was to be decided.

"For the woman," replied my guard, "she was somewhat ill, as I heard say, in mind or body, or in both, mayhap; and the man of two minds, her father, carried her off speedily unto London, whither he is called to answer for this villanous plot against the Chosen of Israel. As to thee, I hear tell that thou art to be removed to Lewknor, whence the Lord General lies: and that there, after court of war duly held, thou wilt be shot to death, as I have already told thee, for a spy and conspirator against the Parliament."

Just then a trumpet sounded in the courtyard below, and my guard exclaimed, in tones less dry and nasal than he had hitherto used: "These, I doubt not, be the men who are to

lead thee away, Bethink thee, poor youth, (if thou hast ever heard ought save the blasphemies of the Cavaliers), of some goodly matter that may profit thee in another world, for well I wot thy course in this is nearly ended.”

So saying, he gently closed the door, and resumed his beat with ostentatious vigilance along the gallery.

I had not long to muse on the dismal fate that was before me ; never to see Zillah more, and to pour out my blood with all the ignominy of a traitor. I heard a low but well-known whistle under my window, to which I replied by thrusting one hand through the bars, beckoning, as well as I was able to my invisible friend. The next moment the window was darkened ; Bryan had sprung up with wonderful agility, and was clinging like a bat against the bars. He was disguised as a beggar, and his face presented apparently a mass of hideous sores.

“ Oh, Master, dear,” he whispered eagerly, “ my heart is broken for you, and the Lady gone away, and no one to sain or save ! And I have

only a minute to tell your honour everything. When you wouldn't let me go with you among the rebels, I followed you on foot, and as I had no pass, I was obliged to change coats with a beggar's brat, and to spoil my face to save losing you, and being hanged to boot. For I knew danger was coming to you, and I made sure of finding the Lady, and of saving you. But that enemy of mankind, Hezekiah, has had his will of everybody; and he found out the plot, as they call it;—and when the Lady insisted to see you, he wouldn't let her, until she spoke out and put fear into him, and then,—when she came to you, the villain got up some other divilment; what it was, I know not, but in an hour after old Sir Janus was off to London as quick as he could travel, and the Lady in a litter behind him. And the murdering general would have shot you clean out of hand, only that you were ill and they obliged to set out for Lewknor, where they say an attack is expected, and so you are to be taken and tried there.—There they come, and I must be off, if I'd have any chance of ever seeing you alive

again. Good bye, good bye, master dear ; we'll meet at Lewknor, anyhow, if not in life, in death."

So saying, the boy dropped from the window, and disappeared, just as the guards entered my dungeon.

As I afterwards learned, he begged and whined his way through Reading, until he reached the outskirts of the town. There a picket of horse was posted ; their horses fastened to a tree, the troopers lying on the turf. Bryan begged charity from them, maintaining his disguise. In return for a crust of bread, he plucked some grass and offered it to one of the horses, notwithstanding the forbidding of the horseman, who was too lazy however to prevent him. Gradually the boy loosed the bridle of the farthest charger, and as he was about to vault upon him, he whipped out a sharp dagger and cut the reins of the other three horses. Then, springing into the saddle he galloped off ; the enraged troopers fired after him too hastily to hit him, and their pursuit was vain ; their horses were running wild about the fields.

Meanwhile, Bryan rode away furiously, avoiding the enemy's posts, which he had previously reconnoitred carefully; swimming streams and clearing fences, and still ever on the spur until he passed the last outpost of the Roundheads, and met a patrol of the royal horse near Oxford. These he would fain have persuaded to follow him and attempt my rescue; but, brave as they were, they knew it was impossible.

“Go back then,” he exclaimed passionately, “and, if you have hearts of men in you, spare not till you come to the mad Prince—God bless him, he's the only man of sense in the army. Tell him that my master is going to be shot for a spy, and if the morrow's sun doesn't find the royal horse in the vale of Lewknor, the daisies there will be wet with the best blood in England.”

Having thus delivered himself, Bryan rode back again towards Lewknor as long as his horse could carry him; when the horse dropped, he pursued his way on foot.

The Cavaliers, whom Bryan had addressed,

were good fellows and true ; their foaming horses were soon clattering through High Street ; and that sound was scarcely still, when the Prince's bugle rang out, and every trooper in Oxford was in motion.

CHAPTER XX.

I saw where stark and cold he lay,
Beneath the gallows tree ;
And every one did point and say,
'Twas there he died for thee.

OLD BALLAD.

To return to my own story.

The Roundhead troopers that now entered were commanded by one Ditchley—a harsh and brutal soldier, who had served under Wallenstein, and had been attracted like a vulture to his own country by the prospect of blood. He happened first to fall in with the Puritans, who were in want of experienced soldiers and offered large prices for their services. Ditchley accordingly enrolled himself as cornet in Hazlerigg's iron corps. He soon distinguished himself by

his acquaintance with arms, and old Testament texts, as well as by his sanguinary application of them. His figure was almost gigantic, and perfectly clothed in armour. When he entered my cell, his face alone was uncovered, displaying the smallest eyes and the longest nose I ever beheld. Through the latter he always spoke, and now delivered himself in a string of texts that were ingeniously adapted to do duty for the curses with which he had formerly indulged. As far as I comprehended the gist of his observations, I understood that I was to gird up my loins in order to be bound to the horns of some altar in Buckinghamshire.

Though fatigued and exhausted, I felt inclined to resist, and let him do his worst; but the thought of seeming to shrink from death, roused me from my painful lethargy, and I declared my willingness to follow. Ditchley, brutal as he was, had some respect for a soldier's boldness, and then said that he would not hurry me.

"That you shall not," said my gruff kind surgeon, entering and interposing. "Who

ordered thee to take the prey from the hand of the spoiler,—of the healer I should say? This prisoner is in my charge, and as he hath eaten nothing, neither drunk, (except some drugs of potency), he is without strength; and I tell thee he cannot and shall not travel.”

Ditchley addressing the friendly surgeon by the name of “He-that-healeth,” in a tone between that of an execration and sermon, told him to mind his own bloody business and to hold his tongue.

I could only thank the good Samaritan, and express my willingness to depart. I was indeed weary of that melancholy tower. I longed for change, and could not but hope for some little chance of seeing Zillah, anywhere rather than there, before I was to die. Innocent as I was, I knew that my condemnation was certain, and my defence would be unheeded. Hezekiah alone could bear witness to my innocence of any share in this plot, and he, I knew too well, would at least stand aloof.

Nevertheless, I yielded to necessity, as if it were my own will, and only took advantage of

my surgeon's intervention to ask for some refreshment. I knew not how much I needed it until it appeared—the savoury steak, the foaming tankard — even in that sombre hour, were capable of giving pleasure, and of bringing me down from the soaring reveries of a long fasting and enthusiastic dreamer, to the palpable realities of life.

Soon afterwards, I was in the saddle, a trooper riding on each side of me, and a score more before and behind. To my great satisfaction I saw that the friendly surgeon accompanied the detachment; and so we came to Lewknor as the sun was setting.

After an hour's rest in a barn, I was summoned to the presence of a Court of War. That tribunal was composed of some half-dozen officers, most of whom wore their armour awkwardly, and looked like citizens who had assumed a knightly dress for some masque or pageant. Such as they were, however, they were my judges, and their functions were soon performed. As spies were the enemies most feared, they received no mercy in those

days from either party: if dubbed with that ominous name, the doom of the accused was certain. At once for trial and defence, I was merely asked, "whether my name was correctly stated, and whether I was not found in company with the frizzled Madam, called d'Aubigny, when (taking traitorous advantage of the Parliament's safe conduct) she was detected, as being mother to the damnable plot." I stated the case as simply as I could, and called upon their own minister, Hezekiah, as witness to the truth of my assertion, that I had scorned the office of conspirator.

One of my judges, named Hewson, spoke for all the rest, and thus delivered his judgment: "This Philistine scorneth to conspire, forsooth; but the scorner is an abomination unto men; yea, more especially when he escorteth foolish women, whose heads and hair are filled with deceit and danger to the Commonwealth. Surely, the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and keeping company with traitors, produceth treason. The Parliament hath wisely determined to visit this foul plot,

and all other conspiracy with swift vengeance ; and why should we stay our hands in this case, where we have the prisoner self-convicted of being a spy as well as a conspirator. Wherefore, we have only to pronounce the sentence upon thee, that by the morning's light, thou be shot to death at the village tree ; and meanwhile we shall not withhold from thee such ghostly consolation as our godly ministers can give."

Without further parley, I was hurried out of Court and back to the barn which I shared as a prison, with some others. Fatigued as I was, I refused all offers of refreshment, ghostly or solid, and soon fell asleep, in spite of all the crowd of anxious thoughts that pressed upon my brain.

I must have slept some hours, when I was conscious of a soft warm drop upon my cheek ; I started, could it be a human tear that reached me there, in the midst of enemies who longed to see me die ? The thought was so pleasurable that I feigned to sleep again, in order to collect my ideas ; again and again tears fell upon me,

and I found that my head was carefully pillowed on some knee. The light began to dawn, and I saw that fetters bound the feet of my kind watcher.

At length a low and piteous voice whispered in my ear, "Master, master dear, it's light, and soon God's sun will rise and our's must set,—Ohone and sorrow!"

"My poor Bryan!" I exclaimed, "now, indeed, I feel the anguish of this hour. My poor boy, well may'st *thou* shrink from sharing the doom which to me has scarce a pang."

The boy dashed away the tears from his eyes, and exclaimed reproachfully — almost angrily: "And did you think it was a thought for myself that could make a woman of me? Oh no!—no—no!—it's little that matters what becomes of the life you saved, when the pride and the hope of my heart's gone from me.—And to think I could not save you from being murdered, after all!"

Between sobs and tears, he hastily told me the little story of his own adventures that I have already related; adding that his object in

returning to the enemy's quarters was to seek the Lord-General or Hampden, from whose nobler character, he hoped to obtain at least some respite for his doomed master. But he had been observed, pursued, taken and recognized, and condemned to die by the same court of war that had lately pronounced sentence upon me. For him, however, a sadder fate was destined—he was to die a felon's death.

As this sad and faithful story was being told, the light grew stronger and stronger; and the end of my poor Bryan's tale was almost drowned in the beat of drums that summoned the soldiers to witness and assist at our execution. Then there was a pause, ominously broken by a muffled drum, that seemed to sob out our summons to depart. The large door was flung open by the sentinels from within, as those without knocked with the butt-end of their muskets.

When the sun's rays streamed in gloriously with the fresh morning air, with sweet smells, and all the cheerful sounds of rural life—we appeared to be awakening from some

hideous dream ; but, as soon as our eyes could bear the light, we beheld the solemn preparations for sending us into another existence. For a moment I was uncertain as to which of us was first to suffer : in our suspense, Bryan, flung his arms round my neck, and sobbed as if his heart would burst through his doublet and escape at once from sorrow. But his name was called, and he was himself again ; he started to his feet promptly, smiling brightly, as he exclaimed :

“ Now I can forgive these rebels everything, since they did not make me see you die.”

With these words he walked away proudly after the ill-looking scoundrel who led the way to the fatal tree. Not one word of farewell did that faithful boy entrust himself to speak ; perhaps he thought we were to meet so soon ! perhaps he feared to unman himself or me before our enemies.

I tried to hide from my sight the approaching terrible scene ; it seemed to force itself through my closed eyes, and in such hideous forms, that I looked again at the reality in

hopes to mitigate the imagination of it. On went that noble boy, attended by the foul executioner as by some evil shadow—a few soldiers preceded him, and forced a passage through the crowd collected under the large oaken bough, whence hung the fatal cord.

And now they make a space, and pause—perhaps while my poor page utters his parting prayer. Now—high over their heads, I see him, with the evil shadow by his side, and long dark arms busied about his young and comely neck. Now he stands alone, and in another moment he sinks a little, slowly as it seems to me, but his head is on one side, and their deed is done!

At the same moment a hoarse, loud, hasty order is heard “to advance the other prisoner,” and I stepped forward with alacrity. Twelve musketeers stood with arms at the recover, as I was led to the fatal tree. Before I knelt to receive their fire, I turned one glance upon the body of my poor page—ah! it was still struggling; my brain swam with the horror, and I was only roused as the drums

beat hurriedly—no muffle this time!—and the trumpets sounded: and I thought it strange, when Ditchley, with an outspoken oath, put his hand upon my shoulder and tried hastily to make me kneel.

Did the soldiers fire too soon and mistake their aim—or what? A volley was heard; Ditchley, with a bullet in his brain, fell prostrate at my feet: the musketeers disappeared; shots came quick and fast and all around me—then loud shouts, and the tramp of cavalry with Rupert's war-cry; then I knew that the royal horse were in among the enemy, and that I was saved. Rough and stern, however, was the conflict all around; when, out from the mass, burst a bold horseman, who swept his gleaming sword above my head, high in air, and cut the accursed cord whence my poor page hung suspended almost over me. All this passed far more rapidly than I can tell, and before the brief strife around was ended, I had Bryan's form resting in my arms, and the faint struggles, that had filled me with horror, now thrilled me with delighted hope.

It was old Blount who had done such prompt and ready service with his sword. As soon as he could rein up his horse, he turned quickly round, and looked on me with a tear in his stern eyes, but without uttering one word. Then something caught his sight in the *mêlée*, that was still raging, though I scarcely heard the clashing steel and wild curses and deep groans, and quick sharp shots, that told how vengefully the royal horse were doing their work. All my attention was riveted on the almost motionless form that had flung away its faithful spirit to do me service.

But the cool and imperturbable Blount, seeing that there was no time to lose, had galloped off for a surgeon. He had observed a small and desperate group of Roundheads hemmed into a corner, and among them was one, whom from his dress, he rightly judged to be a leech. It was indeed my gruff friend, He-that-healeth. Vainly however Blount besought quarter for him to the angry Cavaliers, who were infuriated by a vague impression that

some of their officers had just been put to death by those who were still fighting hard in front of them

Blount lost no time in further useless entreaties, as if more furious than any of the assailants, he dashed spurs into his horse, rode through the defenders, and laid his iron grasp on the surgeon's collar: then, without giving him or his comrades time to recover themselves, he rode out again through them, literally carrying in his bridle-hand his prize, whilst with the sword-arm, he defended him from friends and foes.—A few minutes before, I had been standing in front of the enemy's musketeers: now they and their companions were prisoners or dead, and their half-choked surgeon was employing the best means in his power to undo their murderous work.

My intense anxiety during his operations, diverted my mind from the sudden transition in my own case to freedom and to life. I had so made up my mind to die, that I could with difficulty believe in my escape. As, with my fingers pressed upon my throbbing

temples, I sat apart, endeavouring to forget suspense in analysing my own sensations, I heard the gauntleted hands of Blount clasp together with a loud clap, and at the same time, a grave sort of chuckle escaped from the surgeon.

“ It’s little comfortable,” said the latter, gazing with real pleasure on the convulsive gasps of his patient; “ it’s little comfortable the coming back to this comfortless world; but the lad’s saved, and may have yet time to repent him of his manifold malignancy.”

By this time the sounds of death and strife had ceased, trumpets were sounding eagerly the recalls, and a body of horse drew near to our rejoicing group. Prince Rupert rode hastily up to me, pressed my hand cordially, and exclaimed energetically, “ By St. George, I am a prouder man this morning than if I had marched through London. ’Twas a near escape, however, and all is not done yet. Mount, my friend, one of my led horses, for we shall have to ride far and fast, and to fight for it too, before we see Oxford again.”

So saying Prince Rupert rode off, and left us to make the best arrangements that we could. The boy, still almost unconscious, was placed before Blount upon his saddle, and I rode by their side ; having first escorted the surgeon beyond the reach of our soldiers : his freedom was all, except promises, that I could then offer him. Our troops were already in column, and moving along the Chiltern hills ; the dragoons, with Will Legge, in front ; the few infantry, with the prisoners, bringing up the rear as fast as they could move.

It was only the beginning of an eventful day : we reached Oxford as the sun went down ; but before then, we had fought our way through Chalgrove field, and Hampden had received his death-wound.

CHAPTER XXI.

That I neither know how she should be loved, or how she should be worthy, is the opinion that fire cannot melt out of me. I will die in it.

SHAKESPERE.

DAYS passed on ; Essex had retired his army from our immediate neighbourhood ; Bryan was still under the surgeon's hands, but rapidly recovering. With this exception, all outward traces of my late adventure had passed away ; but my thoughts were sorely troubled. The strange manner in which, by chance and the ingenuity of Hezekiah, I had been prevented from replying to Zillah's accusation ; the uncertainty of her fate, and other anxieties connected

with it,—all these were painfully yet pleasantly blended with the remembrance of our last interview. Its very sorrow made the joy more tender, and Zillah's belief of my unworthiness proved sweetly the strength of an affection that could triumph over such belief.

Those who love are never lonely; at least those who love spiritually, for spirit can commune with spirit, though the form which represent them to our earthly vision be severed widely as the poles asunder. The spirit of her who fills our heart seems to pervade every thing around us; her smile blends with every ray of light; her voice is heard in every gentle sound; her very breath is felt in every breeze that fans our fevered cheek.

Thus it was that I lived in Zillah's imaginary presence; and thus it was that I waited, almost patiently, for the happiness of once more seeing her.

The explosion of Waller's plot had revived the greatest animosity among the political leaders of the revolution; but at no period of the war do I remember a more frequent and chivalrous

interchange of courtesies between the fighting men. The former, in the first moment of their excitement, denounced death to all who were concerned in the plot. Poor Challoner and Tomkins were executed at once; but Waller was reserved for a worse fate—to endure a prolonged life, branded with dishonour, and stained by the basest treachery. The leading lords were saved by their great influence and professed penitence.

The accidental battle and victory at Chalgrove proved of great interest to me. Two officers of rank had been sorely wounded and made prisoners; being unable to move, they had been granted parole by Prince Rupert, and this they basely broke. Essex, however, who was of a nobler nature, on remonstrance offered to liberate any two royalist prisoners in their place; and my brother Hugo was thus restored to me.

Our meeting was a very happy one; we had parted in despondency and sorrow; we had undergone trial and danger, and each of us could now read in each other's brightened

countenance that our heart's deepest sorrow had been soothed. We wandered away at once to the quiet Christ Church meadows; and there, under the old trees, that before and since then have heard stranger tales, I learned from my brother's lips the events of the last momentous week.

On the day of my quarrel with Digby, it will be remembered that Hugo, according to Prince Rupert's orders, had made a reconnoissance, been attacked, taken prisoner, and carried off to Reading. He added to Blount's account of his capture, that that precise servant had done his brave best to rescue him: when he found that was hopeless—even while fighting for his own life—he had struggled near enough to my brother to shout out and inquire “whether he had any commands for his master at Oxford?”

On his arrival at Reading, Hugo, having received some slight wound, was placed under the care of my friend, He-that-healeth, who was characteristically gruff and kind to him. He then learned that Lady d'Aubigny's mission was already well known, and that the only

matter not clearly ascertained, was the place in which the important paper was kept. On the evening of our arrival at Reading, Hugo was removed to London in a waggon, under escort, with some other prisoners. To his astonishment, among the latter he saw Phœbe: she was treated with respect, well mounted on a palfrey, and accompanied by her waiting-woman, who rent the air with acclamations of distress.

Phœbe rode close behind the waggon in which her young lover lay bound and so shaded by the cover as to be indiscernible to her: but to him, a bright moonlight showed clearly the lovely face of his childhood's play-fellow and his manhood's mistress. She looked solemn and pale, but not dejected. The bright fluttering colour of her cheek was gone—with the high spirits of which it seemed the outward sign; her radiant eyes were veiled by the long lashes that drooped downwards, and sometimes glistened with a momentary tear. But her carriage was calm and dignified, and the character of her beauty, though so changed, was still perfect in its

kind. At least so thought the young lover ; and so apparently thought the Roundhead leader of the escort, who, riding stiffly by her side, still turned his eyes often, and perhaps involuntarily, on the exquisite countenance of the young " malignant."

And thus they moved along for a little while. The opiate that the surgeon had administered to Hugo could not soothe to sleep his excited spirit ; but it wrapt him in a happy trance through which he saw that loved woman as a vision—a ministering angel, keeping off all pain, and softening the very sound of the hostile cavalry as they tramped beside him.

There was but one occupant of the hospital waggon besides Hugo, and he was almost unconscious. A low moan, however, sometimes escaped from him, which made Phœbe shudder, and involuntarily dart a glance for a moment into the rude, uneasy couch of the dying soldier ; for dying he was. Hugo heard the death-rattle in his throat, but was too much prostrated to give the alarm. He felt

his companion's hand wander over his breast until it reached his neck and long hair. Then some happy illusion seemed sent to shed comfort on the dying man.

“Yes, Jeanie,” he muttered faintly; “yes, yes, we won't scoff any more, but we will pray.”

And his parched lips moved, and his hands were clasped together, and with one loud moan, he died.

There had hitherto been perfect silence, except for the measured tramp of horses, and the faint clank of armour, and these sounds had become so monotonous, as scarcely to interfere with the repose of all around them. And when, through the stillness of all human sounds, that unearthly moan broke forth upon the night, a shudder seemed to thrill through every heart. Phoebe instinctively reined up her palfrey, and the waggoner stopped his horses with a loud *Wo!* that seemed an almost appropriate exclamation. The officer in command looked into the waggon, and perceived that one of his prisoners had escaped at once from him and life.

“Truly he is departed,” said the Cornet, whose youth had hitherto prevented the stern system of his brethren from taking full effect upon his nature. “I trust he died not in his sin ;” he added, gently drawing the Cavalier’s threadbare cloak over his dead face.

Then the procession moved on again, until arrived at Maidenhead, they were stopped and interrogated by the sentinels. Here, after some conference with the commanding officer of the little garrison, the corpse was removed from the waggon, and the procession moved on once more : the shadows of the houses were left behind, and the moon shone out again on Phœbe’s face.

But that face was now changed ; no longer calm, pale, and resigned-looking, her cheek was flushed with feverish red, and her eyes strove piercingly to scrutinize the interior of the waggon. She had recognized Hugo when the lamp-light was thrown in upon the dead body to remove it, and perhaps she expected momentarily to see the same tragic scene re-enacted. At length, her emotion caught the

young Cornet's attention, and with as much courtesy as the forms of his discipline would permit, he inquired if she was unwell; expressed a fear that she had been too much shocked, deplored his inability to return with her to the village, and concluded by asking her, with some hesitation, whether she would rest herself for a little while in the waggon, as another hour would bring them to their halting-place.

As Hugo listened to this proposal his heart beat wildly. He raised himself as she hesitated, to listen for the next word, and his suspense was rewarded by the waggon being stopped, and Phœbe and her waiting-woman preparing to ascend it.

"But first," said the Cornet, "it is meet that I have this malignant removed. Ho! you Sergeant Resist-the-flesh-and-the-devil, dismount, and put our prisoner on the woman's beast of burden; softly, however, for he may be sore wounded."

"Oh! no, no!" exclaimed Phœbe; "sooner would I walk on foot than cause this poor Cavalier to suffer more than he already does."

Then observing a very unsympathizing expression on the tough young Cornet's face, she added timidly: "Besides—besides, I have known him before; we were children together long ago."

Seldom has beauty pleaded in vain, especially in manly England, to a youthful heart, and under the romantic spell of moon-lit glistening tears. The young Cornet, to do him justice, tried not to look conscious, and gave the order as Phœbe desired; assisting her, however, into the carriage with something of a martyr's air.

Again the waggon moved on, and Phœbe and Hugo were left together. The waiting-woman, in addition to her former terror and fatigue, shrunk with dread from the corpse's resting-place, covered by Hugo's feet, wrapped her head in her wimple, and soon sobbed herself to sleep, or at least to perfect silence.

In the meantime, Hugo and Phœbe gazed on each other with an embarrassed air; the former, now thoroughly roused, and utterly forgetful of all pain, would have thrown himself

at Phœbe's feet, or rather at her knees, but that a proud and hurt recollection of the past restrained him. Phœbe seemed like a ghost, desirous of speaking, but unable to do so until first addressed. But gradually the mysterious agency of the features was mediatizing between those two disturbed young souls. Hugo's wore an expression of pained and almost reproachful inquiry, to which Phœbe's replied by an air of frank and fearless confidence, touched with deep tenderness and sympathy. Hugo took her hand, and clasped it in both of his.

At last Phœbe said, softly, "Dear Hugo, are you suffering?"

"Not so much as when last we met," he replied.

"What, at Lady d'Aubigny's?" rejoined Phœbe. "Surely you must be under some strange illusion; and, now I think of it, so seemed your brother too."

If something of a sarcasm rose to Hugo's lips, he was too magnanimous or too simply loving to utter it. He spoke out frankly :

“Phœbe,” said he, “do you not love Lord Digby?”

That home question needed no audible answer; her countenance replied: no timid blush, no eye-lids suddenly let fall to veil the tell-tale eyes, but a full, bright, child-like look of surprise and innocence was there.

“Love Lord Digby!” she repeated. “Love that man, of whom, ignorant as I was, I told you to warn your brother long ago! Alas! if those we love are so ready to suspect and become prepossessed against us, how can we wonder that our rivals are ready and prone to take the darker view of our conduct, if there be room for doubt.”

“But then,” rejoined Hugo, “you admit that there was room for doubt?”

“For those who choose to doubt, in love as in religion,” said Phœbe, “there is no such thing as perfect confidence. But this is too painful a doubt for me to leave unanswered, and I will answer as simply and confidingly as if we were still children wandering hand-in-hand

through the old forest of Beaumanoir. I visited Reading with my father and Zillah; my father took up his residence there, I believe, because it was half way between the two great warring parties, and moreover, I suspect, because he was interested in this wretched plot of Mr. Waller's. Zillah wished to be there because she considered it as Mount Tabor, and expected to behold the deliverance of Israel, as she called it; and I preferred to be there too, rather than live like an Eremite at Bifrons, weaving endless embroidery, or groundless fantasies among handmaidens. It may be, too, that I had some interest in those who lay besieged at Oxford; but if I had, report soon told me that my interest was not returned.

“ In short, dear Hugo—there, turn your poor bandaged head upon this pillow—I heard that a romantic and gallant young Cavalier had been very much moved by sorrow for, and sympathy with, a romantic and beautiful widow. Her husband had fallen at Edgehill; the young

Cavalier of whom I speak had received his last sigh, and whether he had wafted it unchanged or not to the Lady d'Aubigny's ear, I know not—ah! that jolt! I fear you are uncomfortable—but his attentions did by no means end there. Well, the Duchess of Richmond invited me, her poor kinswoman, to visit her at Oxford, and to see how gallantly all you Cavaliers comported yourselves. My father was pleased to have one daughter in the King's party; I myself was a little curious, independently of my loyalty, to visit yon studious city, and observe with my own eyes the consolation of the widow. In short, I went; I was so fortunate as to be lodged in that widow's apartments. I there heard much of the young Cavalier, the consoler. He was away, seeking to pluck some laurels from a Roundhead's brow; perhaps he thought that the plant of honour would look well among weeds. I went out hawking with the Duchess of Richmond, and Lord Digby joined our party. I suppose he had nothing else to do, for he

devoted himself to me. He sometimes spoke to Lady d'Aubigny, however; concerning *her* young Cavalier, and regretted his absence, and then he had possessed himself of some dangerous secret relating to my father, which forced me to be confidential with him. At length, he promised to put me in possession of all the papers which could criminate him, at the same time hinting that for my sake—that is, for the sake of my “filial affection,” he was running great risk of honour, if not of life. My heart is naturally warm, and his manner was so natural and truthful that I believed him, and a few minutes afterwards I told your brother that I had misjudged this man, who had been so generous. I saw your brother's brow darken, but I little thought to what issue my thoughtless words would lead.

“The next day every one went away against Lichfield and Birmingham with Prince Rupert, and many days elapsed before you and your brother came to Lady d'Aubigny's. I saw you from the college windows; I heard your

foot upon the stone stairs ; every step appeared to fall heavier and heavier on my heart, and when you entered, I had no word—no power to utter one. I did not even look at you ; I saw only Kate d'Aubigny's look of triumph as you came. I soon felt that you had passed her by, for I saw a cold, dark shadow cross her face, and the next moment our hands had met. I could have thrown myself on my knees and wept for very thankfulness.

“ Just then Lord Digby entered. His eyes sought in Kate d'Aubigny's countenance and mine the history of the last few minutes. He was the last person I should have wished to read my feelings. I received him as usual, even when he ostentatiously claimed my confidence and detained me in the window whilst he explained why he could not, for the moment, procure for me my father's papers. Suddenly you left the room. I expected you to return as soon as my formal visitor was gone : you came not. Soon afterwards we heard that you had left Oxford, been wounded, and made

prisoner; that your brother and Lord Digby had fought, been condemned, then pardoned. Finally, to conclude this tale of sad adventure, Kate d'Aubigny was enjoined to depart promptly on her mission, and I was so strongly advised to accompany her, that I had no option to remain. You know the rest.

“ We passed freely through these rebels' hands until we reached Reading, and there our property was searched most rigorously for some supposed treasonable correspondence against their State. Soon after the searchers had retired, that dreadful Master Doom entered, and told me, in the language of Isaiah, to prepare instantly to proceed to London. I believe he feared lest my father should insist upon my deliverance. Another hour saw me in my saddle—another, and I am here !”

Having so said, poor Phœbe pressed Hugo's hand against her beating heart, and bending over it, attempted to move away the hair that clustered over his bloody brows, and so to read in his eyes if he were satisfied. It was some

time, however, before he could collect himself sufficiently to speak, and when he began, the waggon halted ; the Cornet rode up and assisted Phœbe to alight, and soon afterwards Hugo found himself once more in a lonely and well-guarded chamber.

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